

West should look to itself in light of Asian crises

THE collapse of the Japanese economy will not only threaten Asia recovery but will leave Britain more vulnerable to Japanese pull-outs should significant overseas funds be repatriated to cope with its own de-bellated crisis (Editorial, April 12).

The penny is beginning to drop that dependence on foreign capital leads to financial vulnerability, threatens domestic jobs and stokes up global deflation. It is time the gentleman who supposedly directs Britain's economy, Gordon Brown, realised that to weather the storm of inadequate demand and rising unemployment, control over your own economy is a key defence.

*Chick Hines,
Twickenham, Middlesex*

CRISES are inevitable in "gangster economies" such as Japan and Russia, where the value of the population's work in creating wealth in the real economy is siphoned off via the money economy. Japanese finance houses have extended billions in unsecured loans to dubious characters.

Britain has had its share of such scams — from Nick Leeson to the Cayman and Channel Island tax havens — where money lost by a bank or brokerage magically pops up in a chain of shops in Tokyo or a beach bar in Bournemouth, neatly laundered via a metals futures dealer in South Africa.

Collapse is threatened when it dawns on the majority of honest, hard-working citizens that despite good work, productivity and commitment, their security diminishes while predatory parasites get richer and richer. They realise their work

ing lives have been stolen; motivation to participate in the hopeless Asian recovery has been lost, and the economy wades down.

If the banking community willed it, well-programmed, powerful computers could ensure that the money economy always accurately reflects the real economy and that sticky fingers are removed from the global cash-register. It is not too late for Japan to publicly track down such funds and restore national confidence in the value of thrift and work.

*Noel Hodson,
Oxford*

THE Nobel prize-winner Jose Ramos Horta has called for Western pressure on President Suharto, but in asking the West to demand that Indonesia undergo political reforms, he is being either naïve or overly optimistic. No Western economic rescue package for Indonesia is likely to include demands for a guarantee of independent trade unions, freedom from censorship or the liberation of political prisoners. The West wants a stable Indonesia — how else can it afford to buy its weapons? — not a democratic one.

*(Dr) Jeff Haynes,
London*

GEOFFREY TYCER claims that Western foreign policy decisions are made according to which other nations are more reliable and honourable — more "like us" (April 5). What nonsense. Foreign policy decisions are made in the light of self-interest. Western nations ask themselves, "Which of these dictators/blackguards/maniacs will do

us the least harm?", or "What will we gain most by supporting?"

A shocking example is the support of successive Australian governments for Indonesian annexation of East Timor. This behaviour is, in effect, an assessment of Indonesia because Australian governments are scared of their military might. Indeed, we even help to train them. There is also the not insignificant matter of oil reserves in the region.

Self-interest triumphs over reliability and honour. We forget this at our peril.

*Bob Holderness-Roddam,
Austins Ferry, Tasmania, Australia*

Disquiet on the Preston front

NOTHING is so deeply offensive to the people of another country as comments such as Peter Preston's. "The United States is not a society like ours, peopled by men and women like us, it is a deeply foreign land, and — in that sense — deeply alien" (Little Rock seems closer than Calais, April 5).

In Australia "racism" includes the belief that people of another country are different, usually worse, on the basis of their nationality. In that sense Preston's article is deeply racist. In fact the US is too subtle for him. In most of what he writes, he articulates a condemnation of Britain — not the US.

America has many cultures. If Britain chooses to embrace the fake or real Hollywood one, a violent one among the plebeian inhabitants of rural Arkansas, that reflects on the British media, not Americans. And another thing: George Mitchell is the real problem. When such man could have served on the Supreme Court. Your correspondent, it seems, is as glib as well as xenophobic.

*Robert Briggs,
Lyons, ACT, Australia*

THANK you Peter Preston for your article. Its contents need constant reiteration if we are not to become a quaint little island off the "Greater American Empire".

*Edith Nohay,
Rushin, Wales*

Zimbabwe still in thrall to whites

IT is shameful the way whites have over the tide of history has moved against them. Are Zimbabweans now being persuaded that it is mainly those who for 0.04 per cent of the population to sit coily on more than 50 per cent of all fertile land while 80 per cent of its citizens are huddled up in the sandy and rocky areas assigned to them by colonial settlers? Is this the heritage bequeathed to whites by the so-called Right of Conquest? If it is, then surely those who for 0.04 per cent conquered should enjoy the same privilege.

But Zimbabwe continues to compromise its dignity for the sake of foreign aid and foreign investment. Until self-reliance is salvaged, it does not matter how much aid is received: a sense of insecurity will guarantee that the majority will always be tethered to the apron-strings of the great, benevolent white master. This is evident throughout Africa.

Economic development has

much less to do with manipulation of fancy economic ratios than with maximising resource-use for the good of the majority.

Zimbabwe's main problem (and that of countries throughout Africa) is one of failing to address grassroots fundamentalism, preferring instead to be side-tracked by the notions of foreign investor confidence as if we cannot empower our own people to be investors. There is such a thing as domestic-led growth. It is about time Zimbabweans and all Africans deliberately moved away from the "foreign is better and right in everything" mindset and cultivated some confidence in themselves.

*Havayani Matswau,
Harare, Zimbabwe*

Upsetting the natural balance

MARK COCKER says that it is unfair to blame the British for the release of the European starting into the United States (Starling in the ascendency, February 22). The only really unfair thing was his knee-jerk dumping on starlings for their successful colonisation. The parochial woodpecker-kicked-out-the-cactus and eating-all-the-chicken-feed anecdotes are typical of local incidents blown up out of proportion by statist naturalists yearning for US wildlife to revert to some unspecified Eden where all original species are eternally native.

The introduction of one non-native species is insignificant compared with man's gargantuan butchery of animal habitats. Increasingly, scientific evidence strongly suggests that the real problem is not the alien species but the man who does his mindless thing, native species often have a tough time adapting; indeed, some become extinct. Other species that are non-natives among them — move ju.

Clearly, the cause of native species would be much better served if the likes of your correspondent worked to mitigate the impact of man.

*(Dr) Christopher Pantou,
Donville, California, USA*

I WAS disappointed to see the Guardian Weekly using emotive and irrational language in dealing with a serious conservation problem (Lushall duck faces "widespread", March 1). The proposed culling of 3,500 fertile ducks in the UK to save a whole species (the white-headed duck) from extinction is an unpleasant job, but a necessary one. It has something to do with "eugenics", "racism" or "genocide", and everything to do with the conservation of biodiversity. To put the figure into perspective, every year more than 1 million ducks are shot for "sport" in the UK.

*(Dr) Andy J Green,
Seattle, Spain*

IN STATING that hares often do best in areas where they are most ferociously hunted, Mark Cocker (A history of hare loss, March 22) is perpetuating a frequent claim of course. However, I welcome his mention of the brutality of hare-coursing. Until Parliament backs a bill to outlaw the hunting of wild animals with dogs, these cruel and dangerous sports will continue and the sight of a March hare, so vividly described by him, will become increasingly rare.

*Rocky Chapman,
Oxford, Kent*

Briefly

PAULINE Melville's question on the similarity in "racist" politics between India's Indira Gandhi and Guyana's Anand Singh is misguided (March 26). Indira Gandhi had played numerous anti-political roles while her husband, Chodai, was alive. Chodai Jagan summarised her career in a short sentence in his book *The West On Trial: My Fight For Guyana's Freedom*: "At one and the same time, she combined three jobs — housewife, party secretary and minister." In the past she has held the ministerial portfolios of home affairs and of labour, health and housing. She was also once named Deputy Speaker. Whereas, until recently, Sonia Gandhi's role was that of a housewife of a prominent politician. She did not even become an Indian citizen after Rajiv Gandhi had become prime minister.

*(Prof) Ravi Chhabra,
Sacramento, California, USA*

BENJAMIN Netanyahu's spokesman is quoted as saying that the European approach is "no Palestinian and one-sided" that the only possible mediator is the United States (March 15). The latter, of course, is so even-handed that it has shelved out billions of dollars to support Israel and to provide the arm and ammunition that have found their targets in Palestinian bodies.

*R M Prokosh,
Birchgrove, NSW, Australia*

JCAN understand what is meant by a brilliant mathematician or a brilliant composer, but what is meant by a brilliant cynicologist (April 5)?

*(Dr) Paul Scott,
Auckland, New Zealand*

RICHARD TILT argues that black people are more likely to suffer positional asphyxia than whites (April 5). He's right. People with black skin rather than white to physiological difference are indeed more likely to be strangled by prison officers. Or have I misunderstood him?

*Ray Smith,
London*

I WAS fascinated to read that 28.8 per cent of Brussels' French will voters are Flemish (April 5). As a native of Brussels, I can confirm that it is a fact. I calculate that future plutons must incorporate exactly 1273 men each of which 51 will be Flemish. I work out a 28.8 per cent, or 28.48 per cent if we're being a bit dash and rounding off to two decimal places. These European Commission directives must be catching.

*Paul Cocks,
Amsterdam, Netherlands*

The Guardian Weekly

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Students join fray in Iran crisis

David Hirst in Beirut and agencies

IRANIAN students called off a planned protest at Tehran university on Monday in support of the city's jailed mayor, Gholamhossein Karbaschi, which fuelled moderate and hardline clerics had warned could lead to a violent confrontation.

Student backers of the moderate president, Mohammed Khatami, had called the demonstration to support both the president and Mr Karbaschi against the dominant conservatives, headed by the supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. Like other moderates, the students are the mayor's arrest as a purely political "quasi-coup" an attempt to "stop the rot" in the system.

Mr Karbaschi, a prominent politician, was arrested after Rajiv Gandhi had become prime minister.

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cabinet urged them to call it off so as to "safeguard social tranquility". Reza Barbur, a spokesman for the students' Unity Consolidation Bureau, said the protest was cancelled "to honour the request of the government as well as the president".

Meanwhile another student group called a pro-government protest on Tuesday at the university in the southern city of Shiraz.

The cancellation of the Tehran protest came as the government newspaper Iran suggested that the mayor, arrested on April 4 on corruption charges, may soon be released.

Government leaders from both factions have met twice since the arrest to search for ways to resolve the dispute, with Ayatollah Khamenei's spokesman saying the matter has emerged as the most serious issue yet in the power struggle between moderate re-

formists and conservatives. Neither side's leader has taken a public position, striving to resolve the crisis behind the scenes. But with public opinion largely rallying to the moderates, the affair has become a symbolic trial of strength which neither can afford to lose.

Only Mr Karbaschi's release would satisfy the moderates, but Ayatollah Khamenei would be loath to permit it. On the other hand, the trial of one of his key supporters would not only humiliate President Khatami, it would also guarantee the escalation of the crisis, leading to public disturbances and their suppression by security forces under conservative control.

Even if the big three hammer out some face-saving compromise, it can be only a short-term solution.

Somewhere else, supporters of the individual and irrepressible Ayatollah Khatami, under house arrest in Qum, are again agitating on his

behalf. The national security council is warning them to stop.

The crisis has aggravated personal, political and constitutional conflicts at the heart of a regime in which the Khatamists are mainly represented in a cabinet that has little or no jurisdiction over state institutions still in the grip of the conservatives.

The moderates enjoy growing support from public opinion. Nearly 700 mayors called on President Khatami to "prevent honest officials from being sacrificed to partisan political goals".

Even some conservative mullahs have come out against the judiciary. Ayatollah Khamenei warned that "any escalation of the crisis would be like presenting our enemies with a petri dish to eat".

Somehow, the crisis must be ready to take to the streets. The interior minister has set up a "committee for the defence of Karbaschi", and called for a referendum.

The Week

THE US tobacco industry walked away from a settlement with the government over smoking-related lawsuits estimated at hundreds of billions of dollars. It claimed the deal would bankrupt leading companies. Washington Post, page 16

TROOPS led by Nato arrested two Bosnian Serbs, Miroslav Kovack and Mladen Radic, both indicted in 1995 for crimes against civilian prisoners at Omarska detention camp.

NEARLY 100 civilians and Muslim rebels were killed in Syria during celebrations of the Muslim Feast of Sacrifice.

SERBIAN parliament down a hostile parliament to who greater support than expected in his first, unannounced attempt to become Russia's prime minister. His nomination was expected to be put to a fresh vote this week.

MANUEL Pérez Martínez, a defrocked Spanish priest and one of Latin America's most charismatic guerrilla leaders, died of leucemia in Colombia at the age of 62. His death was announced in the week which 30 people were killed in fighting between the army and rebels.

MORE THAN 90 miners were feared dead in northern Tanzania after flash floods caused pits to collapse.

AT LEAST 41 people were killed as tornadoes and thunderstorms, fed partly by El Niño, blasted across three states in the southeastern US.

Washington Post, page 16

LAWYERS for P W Botha were trying to arrange a deal to let South Africa's last president appear as a witness in a presidential inquiry before a unique private sitting of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, hours before his scheduled court appearance for refusing to testify.

A BOMB exploded in a park in the heart of Islamabad, tourist district, wounding nine people.

MALAYSIA, hit hard by a water shortage in the capital Kuala Lumpur, is now struggling to deal with the crisis, but in many parts of the country because of drought.

FATHER Patrick Sullivan, the only Roman Catholic priest from the US resident in Cuba, says he is being forced to leave his post after failing to sign government authorities.

A LEADING environmental group, the World Wide Fund for Nature, criticised Japan for killing 440 whales for scientific research.



Ugandan soldiers train in the early morning in Gulu, headquarters of government efforts to hold off attacks from rebel groups, some based across the border in Congo. PHOTOGRAPH BY PHILIP LUNLEY

Rebels unite to threaten Museveni

Anna Borzette in Kampala

A COALITION force of Ugandan rebels, the Sudanese government troops and former fighters of the ousted Zairean president, Mobutu Sese Seko, is operating from bases in Garamba National Park in Congo, according to the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA).

Garamba, in the northeast of the Democratic Republic of Congo, borders Sudan to the north and is 100km from the Ugandan border.

The source said the force comprised 3,000 ex-Mobutu troops, 1,500 Ugandan rebels and several hundred SPLA deserters and Sudanese government troops.

The claim was confirmed by Uganda's acting defence minister, Major-General Salim Saleh. "We know they are in the park. We are tracking their movements," he said.

The SPLA source said the Mobutu supporters fled to Garamba in February 1987 after their defeat by the forces of President Laurent Kabila, who seized the capital, Kinshasa, three months later.

The Sudanese soldiers and Ugandan rebels joined the group in March 1987, after a joint SPLA and Ugandan government offensive in South Sudan captured the

border of the Sudan.

During the March offensive the Sudanese bases of the Ugandan rebel West Nile Bank Front were destroyed. Hundreds of WNBFF rebels were killed and more than 1,000 surrendered. But 1,500 rebels and several hundred Sudanese government soldiers escaped to Garamba.

The source said that although the three factions in Garamba had different goals, Sudan's National Islamic Front (NIF) government had been able to co-ordinate their activities.

In December the leaders of the three factions flew to Sudan's capital, Khartoum, where they agreed to unite to attack the SPLA rear-lines. In return, the NIF government has agreed to help WNBFF rebels overthrow Uganda's President Yoweri Museveni, and to help Mobutu's supporters to oust Mr Kabila in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Since the start of the year there have been reports of attacks by the Sudanese government against the source said.

The NIF government hopes that by destabilising Uganda and its allies in the Great Lakes region it will be able to destroy support for the SPLA, which has been fighting domination by the Islamist North since 1989.

Uganda/Sudan border for the SPLA.

It is the first time that SPLA or Ugandan officials have admitted that there are opposition forces in Garamba.

The Sudanese government has acknowledged that 52 student conscripts drowned while trying to flee a military camp outside Khartoum, newspapers reported on Monday.

The first government comment followed reports by opposition groups that 129 conscripts had been killed in the incident on April 2.

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Howard set to call poll on land rights

Christopher Zinn in Canberra

AUSTRALIANS face the prospect of an election focused on Aboriginal issues after the senate refused to endorse a federal bill to curtail native land rights.

The upper house's rejection last week of John Howard's 10-point plan on native title gives the prime minister the trigger to dissolve both houses of parliament and go to the polls.

It will be the first federal election to be fought largely on Aboriginal policy and follows a high court ruling that Aborigines may make land claims on pastoral and mining leases.

The so-called "Wik" decision, called after the Queensland tribe that won the action two years ago, has dominated federal politics for the past year. Two years ago the High Court ruled in favour of the Wik people, who in the fifties were evicted from their lands to make way for a 10-year mining lease. The Wik claim that native title could co-exist with pastoral and mining leases opened a Pandora's box that divided Australian society.

Some say Aborigines could now claim freehold land, and even suburban backyards, have gripped the white community, especially outdoor farmers.

Mr Howard is likely to call the poll — labelled a re-referendum election by the opposition Labor party — by October 26.

Opinion polls suggest his Liberal-National party coalition government will win, but the Wik debate has polarised the country, pitting the urban majority against those in the bush who have the most to lose.

Temperatures are already running high on the once bipartisan issue of Aboriginal affairs, with robust exchanges between MPs. Press photographers have even been banned

from taking pictures in the chamber because of the sensitive nature of the debate.

Last week the Labor deputy opposition leader, Gareth Evans, shouted at Mr Howard, saying: "This bloke seems to be never so happy as when he's bashing black fellows."

But after 18 months of reports about the generation of Aboriginal children stolen from their parents, black deaths in custody and the appalling health and living standards of many indigenous Australians, much of the damage has already been done.

One Aboriginal leader has called the prime minister "racist scum". "From today onwards this is no longer the Native Title Amendment Bill, it is the colonial title amendment bill,"

A senior Aboriginal negotiator, Lois O'Donoghue, said last week: "From today onwards this is no longer the Native Title Amendment Bill, it is the colonial title amendment bill."

Gail Dierker, the head of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission, threatened to resign. "It seems we can have no faith in the government to protect our own rights," he said.

The Wik issue comes after a high court decision five years ago which overturned the legal doctrine used by the first settlers to claim Australia for the British Crown in the 18th century. The newly recognised native title to land was celebrated by the then Labor government, but finding a politically acceptable way to share land has proved difficult.

Some outback cattle and sheep station owners have found their properties the subject of conflicting claims from Aboriginal groups, some of which they say are unknown to them. And the mining industry says uncertainty caused by the debate is affecting the whole natural resources sector.



A security man gives the world a straight look from his lopsided snarl on the Oriental Plaza building site in Beijing. PHOTO: GREG GAYNE

Plant species 'on the point of extinction'

John Vidal

SCIENTISTS warned last week that one in eight of the world's plant species are on the point of extinction, with unknown factors for human survival, culture and medicine.

The first comprehensive international study of the world's threatened plants draws on data from more than 200 countries, and puts more than 34,000 plants on a global list of about 270,000 species.

"There's a big mafia in the education department," Shabbaz Sharif, the chief minister of Punjab, said. "It's a den of corruption and that's why we wanted the army's support to tackle this problem."

The investigators were told to focus on the phenomenon of "ghost" schools. Of more than 50,000 primary schools in the Punjab, it is estimated that as many as 7,000 exist only on paper. In many rural areas corrupt officials and teachers simply pocket the money allocated by the authorities to set up and run new schools.

They go to extreme lengths to cover the deception, submitting imaginary lists of teachers and pupils and even exam results to convince the authorities that the schools exist.

"We have found a number of ghost schools in this district," said Major Haroon Rashid, who is responsible for a small area on the outskirts of the provincial capital, Lahore. "We've also come across fake appointments, fake salaries, fake transfers of staff, fake accounts and fake expense claims," he said.

The soldiers, who received special training for the operation, interviewed staff and cross-checked accounts with official records at every school they visited. The authorities are promising tough measures after the army's findings are handed over in the next few weeks.

"We will remove all the thousands of absent teachers and we will dismiss all those corrupt officials,"

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
April 19 1998

Army scares out 'ghost' schools

Richard Galpin in Islamabad

THOUSANDS of Pakistani troops returned to barracks last week after completing an unprecedented investigation into widespread corruption in the education system.

For two weeks soldiers had been visiting state primary schools in the central province of Punjab in an attempt to stamp out corruption which the authorities estimate costs the province millions of dollars each year.

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US chemical firm admits to PR errors

John Vidal

MONSANTO, the huge United States chemical company that is facing mounting opposition in Europe as it appears headed to biotech foods, has called for genetically modified (GM) crops to be separated at source from traditional foods and has admitted that it has misled consumers' concerns.

In an interview with the Guardian, two Monsanto directors also challenged the British and industry to label all traditional food as "GM-free".

The industry, which has strongly rejected this form of words, refers to label selectively products derived wholly from GM crops.

As Monsanto prepared to mount a multi-million dollar public relations campaign to convince European shoppers of the ecological and global benefits of GM foods, it admitted that it had underestimated ethical and scientific concerns and had misled its products on to the market without explanation.

"We made mistakes which we regret. We should have listened more carefully," said Philip Legat, Monsanto's US director of corporate communications.

The scale and speed of the GM food revolution has astonished observers and worried critics, who see further global internationalisation of farming and no choice for consumers. Last Sunday Monsanto confirmed that 20 million hectares of its soya, maize and cotton are now planted in the US, compared with 0.8 million hectares in 1996.

The company expects GM crops to double in area within two years as biotech varieties of maize, potatoes and oil seed become available, and to grow exponentially early next century as GM rice and wheat, two of the world's biggest crops, are developed.

Until now it has claimed that segregation of GM from non-GM is unnecessary, impractical or too costly. A line that European governments and the food industry have been following as imports of the company's GM soya have flooded in and been mixed with traditional crops.

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Mexican soldiers break up Zapatista town council

Phil Gannon in Mexico City

MEXICAN authorities in the southern state of Chiapas have dismantled the latest pro-Zapatista "autonomous municipality" in a pre-dawn raid involving hundreds of police and soldiers. Nine people would have been in breach of the law anywhere in the world. On the same day the state government arrested seven more people on allegations of kidnapping a peasant and years of aggression against police officers.

The "Ricardo Flores Magon" municipality was established last week in Tapachula, which officially belongs to the municipality of Ocosingo. It was the 32nd autonomous local authority set up by civilian supporters of the Zapatista guerrillas since 1994. The

government regards them as illegal and provocative.

Claiming that he did not wish to create a climate of confrontation, the governor of Chiapas, Roberto Albornoz Guillén, none the less declared that he would "definitely" send any group to violate the legal framework of Chiapas.

The diocese of San Cristóbal expressed concern "above all at the disproportionate scale of the operation". Its spokesman, Father Gonzalo Irujo, pointed out there had not been an operation on this scale "to arrest those who have been committing murders in Chiapas for some time — a reference to paramilitary groups such as the one involved in the pre-Christmas Acatul massacre of pro-Zapatista peasants."

Two years ago the government and the rebels signed an agreement sanctioning the establishment of new municipalities, in accordance with indigenous traditions. But the government is only now seeking to translate the indigenous rights agreement into law, and the Zapatistas say the bill does not reflect what was agreed.

Minister forces Kenya to hold inquiry into torture

Lucy Hannan in Garissa

IT HAS taken a cabinet minister's threat to resign to make the Kenyan government launch an inquiry into allegations of police torture and sexual harassment during an operation against bandits in North-eastern province.

Muslim Mohammed, a staunch supporter of President Daniel arap Moi since 1989, produced video evidence of torture in his constituency after the police commissioner, Duncan Wachira, dismissed the complaints. He says he will resign if proved wrong and is supported by five MPs from the ruling Kanu party and two from the opposition.

Thirty-eight men and one woman are said to have been caught up in a special operation last month in the village of Mhalambala, 120km north of the provincial capital, Garissa. They say they are the victims of a "collective punishment" by a police unit looking for guns and

bandits. After the operation, 16 people were taken to Garissa with flesh wounds, whip lacerations, genital injuries and complaints of limb paralysis.

In Garissa the "Mhalambala victims" are at the centre of claims and counter-claims by Kanu members and the security forces about the government's handling of unrest in the area.

The provincial police officer at Garissa, Jeremiah Mutagoro, did not deny the allegations of torture but said they were exaggerated.

Remote, under-developed, and with a history of separatist sentiments, North-eastern province has been plagued by banditry — and notorious police massacres — since independence. The unrest was exacerbated in the early 1990s when hundreds of thousands of Somalis fled fighting in their homeland and set up refugee camps.

Police, civilians and politicians all claim that the camps are being used by gangs who have brought sophisticated arms into the country.

Nature's witness, page 29

of a developing country, such as education and health facilities.

Although the federal government announced last month that it would double education spending within the next five years and aim to double the literacy rate by 2010, many remain sceptical. Overseas say only an immediate nationwide education campaign will enable Pakistan to catch up with the rest of the region.

"Chasing ghost schools and asking the army to do it is not as good an alternative as asking the army to teach children," said Dr Mahbub ul Haq, president of the Human Development Centre in Islamabad. "We now have 600,000 soldiers scattered all over the country. They are quite well educated and they could be mobilised to teach the 10 million children who are currently out of school."

The problems are the legacy of successive governments that have put spending on defence and prestige projects above the basic needs

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Blunkett faces down jeering teachers

John Carvel

DAVID BLUNKETT, the Education and Employment Secretary, faced down jeering teachers of the National Union of Teachers conference in Blackpool on Monday, warning that their behaviour put decent people off joining the profession.

After a resolute defence of the Government's education record during its first 11 months in office, he asked teachers to abandon their victim mentality and become partners in this campaign for higher standards.

Mr Blunkett escaped the ugly scenes that occurred when he addressed the same conference in Blackpool three years ago, but failed to get the standing ovation which greeted his speech last year in the run-up to the general election.

Doug McAvoy, the union's general secretary, said most delegates welcomed the Government's progress in cutting class sizes and expanding education investment, but he would applaud from moderate

and leftwingers when he castigated the unfairness of the policy of capping and capping failing schools.

At a press conference later, Mr Blunkett said the Government would ignore the NUT's criticism of education action zones and detailed guidelines on how to improve literacy in primary schools. These key parts of the education programme were non-negotiable.

The union had no reason to pursue plans for industrial action to reduce the bureaucratic burden of form-filling. It should respond to the bonfire of red tape he announced on Monday, but if teachers went ahead with the action they should not delude themselves that they could avoid damaging pupils.

"If it was effective, it would disrupt children's education and dislocate their standards agenda," he said. Mr McAvoy said that the Education Secretary was wrong. Limited industrial action would start in some schools on April 27, but it would affect form-filling for government agencies and not performance in the classroom. The action could

escalate in September if Mr Blunkett's promises were not fulfilled, but even then it would not affect pupils' testing or exams.

Mr Blunkett said he did not hear all the jeers from his audience "because they are not all that articulate". Those responsible were a small minority of delegates and a minute proportion of the teaching profession.

After listing the programme of education measures since May, Mr Blunkett said: "We have not managed to wave a magic wand to transform things in the way many people would like, but we have managed to obtain £225 million in England to save the education service."

He was confident about teachers' desire to raise education standards. "Our job is to work with you in partnership... slogans won't do it."

A section of delegates on one side of the hall booed when he defended education action zones — clusters of about 20 schools in deprived areas to be run by local authority/business partnerships. The detailed guidelines on how to

teach reading and writing were not part of a new "era of imposition" on teachers.

"I ask teachers to stop believing they are victims and start seeing themselves as partners in change. It is easy to shout slogans, it is harder to make it happen on the ground... you can be part of the learning age, where inequality and injustice can be set aside."

The reduction to red tape announced by Mr Blunkett will include reduced demands on schools from the Office for Standards in Education, the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, the Teacher Training Agency and local education authorities.

More than a third of 11- to 16-year-olds have been bullied at school in the past year, and almost one in 10 has missed school because of worries about violence, according to a survey of 4,000 pupils by the Association of Teachers and Lecturers published last week. Fifteen per cent said they had been attacked at school. More than a third were worried about violence.

Reform to end council sleaze

Lucy Ward

THE Government last week unveiled new proposals to root out corruption among councillors and council staff.

In a step ministers hope will prove their commitment to stamping out malpractice, authorities will be required to adopt codes of conduct binding councillors and employees.

Following criticism that the present system allows councils too much power to police themselves, the reforms will see the creation of an independent standards board to investigate corruption claims.

The proposals, published in a consultation paper, Modernising Local Government — A New Ethical Framework, form the final piece in the jigsaw of Labour's local government reforms.

Local government minister Hilary Armstrong said: "If people are to value local government, they must have a bond of trust with their councillors and their councils. They must be confident that they are helping their communities, not themselves."

Under the proposals, every council from metropolitan authorities down to parish councils will bring in its own code of conduct, based on a national model but tailored to suit its own structure. The code will cover issues including the requirement to declare interests, the relationship between councillors and officers, rules on expenses and allowances claims and the use of council facilities.

Where allegations are made, the Standards Board will inquire into them through regional panels, whose members would be chosen by regional chairmen from a local list. Councillors found guilty could face a public dressing down or a minimum five-year ban from holding council office.

The proposals follow wide consultation on recommendations put forward in July by Lord Nolan in a report on standards in local government. The responses stressed the need for an external system of handling corruption claims.



Easter rising... Fire fighters are forced to hoist on to lamp-posts and road signs as they bring in inflatable boats to rescue residents from the rising waters of Leominster Spa in Warwickshire. April showers became downpours and caused chaos across the nation. The West Midlands was the worst hit — a month's rain fell in 12 hours and the River Avon rose to its highest level for a century. PHOTO MARK

Anger at honour for Japanese emperor

Ewan MacAskill

VETERANS of Japanese prisoner-of-war camps reacted angrily last week when Buckingham Palace confirmed that the Queen is to invest Emperor Akihito of Japan with the Order of the Garter, Britain's highest order of chivalry.

The Emperor will have the honour conferred on him during his visit to Britain next month. The Queen's decision was made after formal discussions with Tony Blair and the Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook, both of whom supported the move.

Mr Blair, who visited Japan in January, is keen to establish a new, modern relationship with Tokyo and hopes that the war veterans will not create embarrassment by demonstrating during the visit, which is scheduled for May 26-29.

PoW veterans insist they bear no grudge against Emperor Akihito or modern Japan, but see no reason to accept a complacent attitude as long as Tokyo refuses to pay compensation for slave labour carried out by the PoWs. The veterans have been asking for £14,000 each.

Downing Street secured a partial compromise during Mr Blair's visit but not enough to satisfy the veterans. The Government has worked hard to pave the way for a broad, free visit, with Mr Blair's press secretary, Alastair Campbell, encouraging the Japanese prime minister to apologise to the British people in the Sun newspaper in January, and the Foreign Office arranging interviews with the Emperor in potentially hostile papers in the run-up to the visit.

But Bill Holtbam, who was the founder of a Japanese labour camp survivors group, said Emperor Akihito was the son of a war criminal and it was laughable that he should be receiving an award for chivalry.

Buckingham Palace said that the Order was in the Queen's gift, and that there were historical precedents. "There were a lot of links between the two countries," a spokesman said.

A Foreign Office spokesman said: "The sacrifices and suffering will never be forgotten but they [the veterans] will recognise that there has been a long series of discussions with Japan [on the issue]. The

Emperor was a boy when the war took place."

The Emperor's father, Hirohito, was stripped of the Order soon after the bombing of Pearl Harbor in 1941, but had it restored when he visited Britain in 1971 — an occasion on which veterans stood on the streets in silence as his procession passed.

About 12 veterans protested outside the Japanese embassy last week and handed in a letter demanding Japan admit its guilt for "honourable and inhuman" treatment. The group also vowed to continue to push their views in the run-up to Emperor Akihito's visit.

One of the group, Richard Hockell, aged 74, from Walton-on-Thames, Surrey, spent more than three years in four different Japanese camps in Java, and was told he had just two weeks to live before he was liberated by Australian troops. At that time he weighed just 84lb, and he says he still cannot eat properly because "his stomach had shrunk so much".

He said: "The atom bomb saved me. If that had not ended the war when it did I would be dead now."

In Brief

THE British pop star George Michael is facing charges of lewd conduct after being arrested in a men's lavatory in Beverly Hills. The singer, who admitted he was gay in a television interview, apologised to his fans for his recklessness.

THE mother of Caroline Dickenson, the 13-year-old who died in France in 1996, brought an unprecedented civil action against the local education authority that organised the holiday.

EUROSTAR will be fined £2,000 for each person carried from Brussels to London without proper travel documents.

AN UNPRECEDENTED number of women and ethnic minority lawyers have won the title of Queen's Counsel in Lord Irvine's first list of those thought to be the most able 10 per cent of the Bar.

TAXPAYERS face a bill totalling nearly £100 million to compensate quota-hopping Spanish boat owners barred from fishing in British waters following a Court of Appeal ruling.

CHILDREN will be required to have separate passports from October in a move to combat an increase in abductions resulting from broken marriages.

THE National Lottery operator Camelot was told it could continue to do business with a US computer company, Gfied, which sold out its shareholding after its founder and controller, Guy Snowden, was fined by British allegations against Virgin boss Richard Branson.

THE NEW and much wanted traffic fines on British Airways jets could be an airport safety hazard, the Civil Aviation Authority warned.

NATIONAL Air Traffic Services was accused by MPs of "astonishing complacency" in delaying the opening of a £330 million centre at Swaenwick, Hampshire to ease pressure on air traffic controllers.

RECORDED crime fell in England and Wales last year — the biggest drop in post-war history — but researchers warned it is likely to rise again because continuing economic prosperity would lead to the number of crimes up under 24 will reverse the sharp fall in burglaries and thefts.

SIR Ian MacGregor, the businessman who took over Arthur Scargill's striking as chairman of the National Coal Board, has died aged 85.

DOROTHY SQUIRES, a nurse who nursed the 1940s and 1950s, has died aged 83.

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A blessed Good Friday

THESE men and women did noble work. Tired after 30 hours without sleep, their fatigue from 30 years of war proved greater. In the name of the people of Northern Ireland they reached out to their deadliest rivals — and made peace. It took the deaths of more than 3,000 people, the serious wounding of some 30,000 others, but on Good Friday the two sides of that long and bloody conflict joined together to declare, "Enough."

The Easter sun never let up, the air outside the Castle buildings stayed bright and frigid — but still Sinn Féin's chairman described it as "a beautiful day."

And so it was. Inside the Stormont building, men whose adult lives had been filled with talk of armed struggle and no surrender were now sharing a joke, paying warm tribute to each other. Usually hard-faced men came to speak, only to find a catch in their voices. One delegation was spotted in the middle of the night, its members quietly bugging each other.

The emotion was earned, as was the universal declaration that Stormont had witnessed history in the making. There

are important caveats. But no one should lose sight of the scale of the achievement. After three decades of conflict — and an antagonism that has endured for centuries — unionism and nationalism, loyalism and republicanism, Protestants and Catholics have finally found a way to live together. This is an agreement backed by those who represent the men of violence, standing at opposite extremes. Gerry Adams was smiling openly with the blessing of the IRA army council — but so were Gary McKinnon and David Ervine, the men who speak for the convinced killers of hardline loyalism. It is as if the Middle East peace process had brought together Hamas and the Jewish settlers of the West Bank: it is an extraordinary feat of diplomacy.

The politicians counselled against euphoria, rightly warning that the task of reconciliation has only just begun. Prudence would suggest waiting a while before handing out plaques. Even so, it seems ironic to criticise those who pulled off what so many said was impossible. In Northern Ireland, John Hume, Gerry Adams and David Trimble have all earned a place in history. Mr Hume has the courage to stand with Sinn Féin early on, counselling them to choose politics over warfare. Mr Adams led the republican movement away from violence and to

warfare a compromise on its core doctrine of a united Ireland. Sinn Féin has now formally accepted the partition of Ireland — an historic break. Mr Trimble proved the most obstinate negotiator in the last moments, but he showed political strength, too — persuading a body that has made intransigence into an article of faith to compromise. The Ulster Unionists' acceptance of the new ministerial council of the north and south grants the Republic a governmental stake in Northern Ireland for the first time. Until now unionists have regarded the South as an alien, if not enemy, power.

Outside the province, London and Dublin can congratulate themselves. Bertie Ahern buried his mother last week, then headed to Belfast for two sleepless days cajoling and arm-twisting the parties towards an agreement. Tony Blair was pivotal, luring Mr Trimble back to the peace table just when the entire effort seemed doomed. All that was possible thanks to the dogged, indefatigable work of the secretary of state, Mr. Mowlem. Her human touch attracted much criticism these last months, but now she is vindicated: she succeeded where every predecessor had failed.

Thanks in part to her, Mr. Blair has won the prize that had eluded every British PM since Gladstone. It is the crowning achievement of his first year in office.

All the participants were lucky, too, in the choice for chairman. George Mitchell, years of dead-endings in the US Senate stood him in good stead, as did the presence of his two largely untested colleagues from Canada and Finland. It helped that the trio was backed by an American president who believed in the Northern Ireland peace process before almost any one else. John Major and Albert Fujimori authored the first framework document that made last week possible.

The deal may be done, but peace is never a done deal. The signatures are just the start. There will be opposition, but the peacekeepers must stand firm. There will be challenges from within, too — starting with conflicting interpretations of the details of the 67-page document at mean. Several of the parties must now have the plan approved by their constituents and members. Some unionists might balk at the early release of prisoners some republicans may recoil at the release of decommissioning. Both sides are bound to find it hard to sit together with old enemies.

Failure is a possibility. But, as now, is success. The people of Northern Ireland at last have an opportunity to be the natives in peace. It is a time for gratitude, and even the odd private prayer. For this was a blessed Good Friday.

Sinn Féin at the crossroads

Malachi O'Doherty explores the dilemma facing republicans

IT IS little wonder that Gerry Adams held back from affirming the deal secured at Stormont Castle on Good Friday. The real marvel was that he did not reject it completely. Republicans were never going to look on the deal, whatever its shape, as a victory. It would be, at best, a staging post towards full Irish unification. The question was whether they would try to wreck the deal or work through it.

They have some hard decisions to make. Sinn Féin cannot take the sort of semi-detached attitude it took to earlier agreements. It has to decide whether to oppose it in a referendum or to support it. To support it, it will have to reverse its positions on the consent principle and the Irish constitution. It seems virtually inconceivable that it can do either. Pollard disagree with Adams if his party makes the wrong decision.

Sinn Féin's vote rose by 15 per cent when it entered the peace process. There were no caucuses during the elections, yet more nationalists than ever before flocked to its party. Those votes were urging Sinn Féin to make peace. Now the process is over, it must either meet those expectations or lose those votes to the SDLP.

Adams may calculate that many nationalists will be sceptical of the assembly, and campaign against it. But the assembly is now locked into the cross-border bodies. Crashing the assembly either by abstention or by disorder on the streets, would also crash the cross-border Council of Ministers. It is easy to see how this could be done, but few nationalists would thank republicans for doing so.

Electoral dangers compel Sinn Féin, in the short term, to compete peacefully against the SDLP or further jeopardise its vote. Yet the IRA has never before held a ceasefire through an election period. To increase its vote in the "armed struggle" is on an always a bonus.

A truly cynical but perfectly plausible reading of the IRA's decision to end its ceasefire in 1995 with the Canary Wharf bombing would go like this: Sinn Féin was being coaxed into an electoral pact with the SDLP, on a proportional sharing of the vote in nationalist areas, an election period. To increase its vote in the past impossible, and Sinn Féin went on to get two seats. This time there seems little opportunity to use violence so creatively.

Some republicans are wondering how they got into this mess. It was not the underlying principles of the peace process that raised their hopes and kept them involved. They

were always aware of the limitations of the process. But their hopes rested on the support of the SDLP, the Irish government and President Bill Clinton, and the faith that they would push the process beyond its obvious limitations.

Such a last-minute squeeze on the unionists seemed to be working to republican advantage in the last days of the talks, but the final agreement was a bitter blow. The republicans' allies have bought the new agreement and expect republicans to buy it too. If they reject it, and produce more violence to show evidence, are they in place, that the causes of violence are still in place, they will not find the same understanding of their murderous reflexes as they have been shown until now.

Only two weeks ago republicans seemed to believe that they were well on their way to success. They believed that there was a new nationalism in place which could better for far greater change than was to be attained.

Their optimism was out of line with the mood of their people. Former Sinn Féin councillor Martin O'Muilleor expressed despondency in his column in the *Andersonstown News*. "The bottom line for new nationalists is that the Council of the Poles (sic) is out; the sell-out on Articles Two and Three is out; the new Stormont Assembly is out. The so-called 'Irish Prime Minister' Bertie Ahern understands that these bold facts, the sooner we can get down to discussing a sensible arrangement."

Minimal expectations of the new nationalists were that Articles Two and Three would remain intact and that Northernists would have the right to elect members to the Irish Parliament, the Dail. The agreement would have to be understood to have the potential to evolve towards Irish unity, and the SDLP would have to stay with the "new nationalism".

Only a few days after these depressive outbursts, Sinn Féin's Martin McGuinness offered his own evaluation of the tactics of the Irish prime minister. He said Ahern was "playing a blinder".

The gap between the position of O'Muilleor and McGuinness is as narrow and vast. McGuinness clearly thought that there was a small step forward within reach that would lay the old struggle to rest and offer a political way forward to the new nationalists. Adams always had what some loyalists have described as "the luxury of dissent", because sufficient consensus was available without him. But he knows now that the peace process is in. The future of the project has completed itself and republicans are on their own.

Unionists must swallow hard

Henry Patterson on the gamble taken by David Trimble

SIR Oliver Naper of the Alliance party served as a minister in the governing coalition government that was agreed at Sunningdale and struck by the loyalist Ulster Workers' Council in 1974. As the deadline for the peace process approached, he was asked to describe the difference between then and now. His answer was that those who had been on the outside in 1974, bitterly attacking the new administration, were now sitting down with him trying to bring the peace process to a successful conclusion.

However, while it is true that those who used violence to destroy the Irish peace process in 1974 are now proponents of a historic compromise between unionism and nationalism, a significant sector of the loyalist community will be hostile to the agreement. The statement by a former Irish government adviser that an agreement which did not include Sinn Féin was "not worth a penny candle" has become a mantra for many Irish nationalists. Yet David Trimble's task of selling his party an agreement that Gerry Adams could live with will be a formidable one.

The deep-rooted communalism of Ulster encourages a view of politics as a zero-sum struggle in which a gain for the "other side" is inevitably conceived as a loss for one's own. Since its formation, unionism has been driven by tension between the need to accommodate the interests of the British state in Ireland and a hereditary assertion of the Ulster majority's right to run the province as it thinks best.

But the decline in the strength of unionism since the 1960s has encouraged a rethinking of unionist strategy. The key development is the loss of the majority of any single unionist party. Until recently, unionists proposed a "good neighbours" model of relations with the South, in which a new government in the North would work out "practical" forms of co-operation with Dublin.

Anything more was rejected as a form of creeping all-Ireland integration. A compromise has been made possible by a unionist shift towards acceptance of a North-South council that, although established by legislation in the Dail and Westminster, will be accountable to the assembly.

It was the Council of Ireland provisions of the Sunningdale Agreement that proved fatal, so what is there to prevent history repeating itself? First, there can be no denying the low-key nature of the arena in which the council will operate: central health and education, for protection, for example, are not the sort of thing to send loyalists to the barricades.

Second, there is Dublin's decision to accept the Irish constitution to remove the territorial claim on the North. This decisive break will signify the acceptance by nationalists of the reality of Northern Ireland.

For Trimble, some institutional expression of the national identity of Northern Ireland-Catholic minority in the form of Northern peace is a price worth paying. He has won settlement that leaves Northern Ireland firmly within the United Kingdom and for the first time with the acceptance and participation of nationalists.

It is this aspect of the agreement that has caused so much discomfort for Sinn Féin under Adams' leadership, the party has moved far beyond what the more hardline nationalists of Northern Ireland would accept. Adams, who had given up the idea that armed struggle could win Irish unity, still relied on official obduracy to bring talks to a standstill, thus further alienating the Northern majority from the rest of the United Kingdom and forcing a radical shift in government policy towards joint authority.

The document produced by Gerry Mitchell appeared briefly to be contributing to a scenario. However, the swift and decisive rejection of it by Trimble, and the consequent intense involvement of Tony Blair and Bertie Ahern, yielded a new agreement that would severely restrict the republican movement.

Although there is no real basis in the agreement for it to be depicted as "Irish unity", the deal is a significant step. It is a formidable tactical feat to present it as such — and realise that other parts of the agreement could create real problems for Trimble. He will struggle to sell to his own members what would be a real majority of any single unionist party to allow Sinn Féin members elected to a new assembly to take their seats.

Together with the proposals for reform of the RUC and for prisoner releases, the deal is a significant step. It is a formidable tactical feat to present it as such — and realise that other parts of the agreement could create real problems for Trimble. He will struggle to sell to his own members what would be a real majority of any single unionist party to allow Sinn Féin members elected to a new assembly to take their seats.

Chirac and Jospin push for reform

Oliver Biffand

WHAT has been called the "modernisation" — it is a more of a reform — of the French political system under the stewardship of the power-sharing president, Jacques Chirac, and the prime minister, Lionel Jospin, got off to a flying start on April 8, the latest approved two bills, drafted by conflicting interpretations of the details of the 67-page document at mean. Several of the parties must now have the plan approved by their constituents and members. Some unionists might balk at the early release of prisoners some republicans may recoil at the release of decommissioning. Both sides are bound to find it hard to sit together with old enemies.

Failure is a possibility. But, as now, is success. The people of Northern Ireland at last have an opportunity to be the natives in peace. It is a time for gratitude, and even the odd private prayer. For this was a blessed Good Friday.

The government's three-point plan aims to bring about a "more demanding commitment to public service" at the same time as "an increased participation by women in political office" and "a clarification of respective responsibilities within the administration".

The restriction of multi-jobbing was the first plank of Chirac's blueprint for modernising the political system after last month's regional elections. He demonstrated the degree of leverage the far-right National Front (FN) could exert on the mainstream right. It is also revealing that there was considerable dissent by Jospin during the presidential campaign of 1995 and by the Socialist party (PS) in 1996.

As soon as he became prime minister last year, Jospin reiterated his views on the issue in his general policy statement of June 19. He stressed that a restriction of multi-jobbing was something that had not only become a "priority" for political leaders, but was in tune with public opinion.

During the president's traditional July 14 television interview, Chirac

made it clear that he shared Jospin's view and that his stance on the multi-jobbing issue was firm. He said he favoured "limitation, and even restriction to a single office, on condition the matter was thoroughly debated in parliament".

By November 20, when he addressed the conference of the Association of French Mayors, Chirac had shifted his ground slightly: he hoped that "those women and men who have the weighty responsibility of drawing up the law are not cut off from the realities of life on the ground".

Meanwhile Jospin had begun a series of consultations with representatives of all the political parties except the FN, with the aim of finding out what they thought of multi-jobbing. It is such a complex issue that differences of opinion do not exactly follow the dividing line between right and left. There are people for and against multi-jobbing in every political party.

Jospin was clearly tempted to get parliament to approve at least a first reading of the planned new legislation before last month's regional and cantonal elections. But in the end he decided not to rush things.

A minority of deputies belonging to the Socialist group tried to put pressure on Jospin, but to no avail. The women to political, professional and social positions of responsibility; and it appears to constitute the only bone of contention between the president and the prime minister.

Under the terms of the first bill approved by the cabinet it will no longer be possible for anyone elected to the office of deputy or senator also to be a member of the European Parliament (MEP). A deputy or a senator will not be allowed to hold an executive position at local government level or occupy more than one post as a (non-executive) councillor on top of his or her job in parliament or the senate.

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Le Monde



Chirac on a visit to Bosnia last week. At home the president has made common cause with the prime minister, Lionel Jospin, on the issue of political 'multi-jobbing'. PHOTOGRAPH ALAN ARRAULT

require a change in the fundamental law, as indeed will the introduction of "equal access" for men and women to political, professional and social positions of responsibility; and it appears to constitute the only bone of contention between the president and the prime minister.

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No answers to burning questions

EDITORIAL

"THE fire's been waiting to break out for 30 years," quipped a member of the National Amazonia Research Institute. He was referring sarcastically to the fires that have ravaged the forests of Roraima state, in northwestern Brazil, on a scale never seen before in the region.

The fires have not been due to El Niño or any other unexplainable quirk of nature — they are a colossal ecological disaster whose cause is primarily political. Far from being inevitable, it was the result of a resettlement policy that was first implemented at the beginning of the seventies by Brazil's military dictatorship.

The fires spread as a result of the slash-and-burn technique used by settlers on recently cleared land, with little regard for the most elementary precautions.

Claiming to offer "land without people to people without land" — a slap in the face for the indigenous tribes that had been living there for centuries — the succession of generals who ruled Brazil thought they could bypass a genuine process of agrarian reform by taking the desolate inhabitants of the feudal, semi-arid Nordeste and resettling them in the Amazon region.

The policy of populating Brazil's northern territories also served one of the regime's major geopolitical priorities, the National Integration Plan, whose aim was to divert foreign powers' alleged designs on the region.

The result of the massive transfer of ill-prepared migrants was that their poverty was transported with them to the newly settled areas. Forced to keep on destroying more and more forest, because a cleared area can at best produce crops for a period of only two years, the farmers were the principal victims of a perverse policy.

And that policy has been modified in the slightest since the re-establishment of democracy in Brazil. Amazonia continues to act as a "safety valve" for social tensions generated by an inequitable distribution of land in the rest of the country.

In the past three years 47,220 hectares of forest has been wiped off the map. Asian timber companies, despite their illegal operations — including the extraction of tropical hardwood from "protected" Indian reserves — and despite being universally denounced — by non-governmental organisations are continuing to descend into Amazonia on a massive scale. And they are doing so with the blessing of the government.

Unless something is done, the plundering and burning will continue — a situation that is nothing short of an ecological crime. (April 5-6)

Gloom dampens Ecuador election campaign

Nicola Bonnet in Lima

THE twin campaigns for Ecuador's presidential and general elections, scheduled to take place in less than two months, have been dampened by a backdrop of economic gloom. The left-of-centre campaign for March 30, with the official registration of the eight contenders for the presidency. The first round of the presidential election will take place on May 31.

Ecuador's 7 million voters are waiting not only for a succession of national elections triggered by El Niño, but for the return of the economic and social repercussions of the plummeting price of oil, the main source of foreign currency.

As a result Ecuador found itself with three heads of state for a period of 72 hours. While Bucaram led to his home town of Guayaquil on the coast, before eventually going into exile, vice-president Rosalía Arteaga claimed she was elected to a step by his shoes, but then stepped aside in favour of the president of the Congress, Fabian Alarcón, who had the support of the military.

A referendum held three months later confirmed Alarcón's position as a caretaker president, for want of a more satisfactory solution. Then came the election of a Constituent Assembly.

Today political leaders of every political hue are seeking the favours

of the electorate. According to the latest opinion poll, carried out at the end of March by the market institute, the man currently in the lead, with 32 per cent of the electorate intending to vote for him, is Junji Mahud of the People's Democracy party. He is currently mayor of the capital, Quito.

Mahud has the support of the conservative Social Christian party of Leon Pizarro Cordero (president from 1984-88), which is not putting forward its own candidate.

Bucaram, who until last month said he would be joining the presidential race, has now decided to stay in exile in Panama. Following accusations that he misappropriated funds, he risks imprisonment if he returns to Ecuador.

It seems unlikely that any of the candidates will win an outright majority in the first round of the election, in which case the president will be elected in the second round on July 12.

munally is keeping a close and anxious eye on political developments in Ecuador because the economic situation there seems to be the brink of chaos. Alarcón has not taken any steps to curb inflation, which now stands at more than 25 per cent, or to close a yawning budget deficit. And so structural reforms aimed at modernising the country have been implemented.

The cost of damage caused by El Niño (estimated at \$1.2 billion), compounded by the collapse of oil prices, has sent the budget deficit soaring from \$500 million to \$1.3 billion. "Unless we take steps to rein in that deficit, inflation will rise to 100 per cent," says Danilo Carrero, who is in charge of Ecuador's monetary policy.

To reduce the deficit the government put before parliament a proposal to increase value added tax by 40 per cent, but this was rejected. In turn the monetary authorities want Alarcón to devalue the Ecuadorian currency, the sucre, by 7.5 per cent. When the president refused, they resigned. (April 5-6)

Writing a new chapter in her life

Mazarine Pingeot, François Mitterrand's daughter, talks to **Josyane Savigneau** about her literary debut

MAZARINE PINGEOT is a highly intelligent, dynamic and sensitive 23-year-old. She says: "I always saw myself as someone who would write one day. Like a lot of people I started writing short pieces at about the age of 10. But I stopped during the years I was preparing for the Ecole Normale Supérieure."

Pingeot came fourth in the competitive final exam at the prestigious teachers' training college, and is now a philosophy teacher.

Did she ever have doubts about her vocation as a writer? "Yes, when I was about 17. But to me writing is the best way of existing, of justifying one's existence." Luckily there is a true girl behind her shyness, the problem facing Pingeot, the love-child of François Mitterrand, was how to gain recognition as a writer after suffering serious overexposure in the media.

Whatever the quality of the book, she knew that she could get it published, but that it would be for the wrong reasons. "Now they're going to get at me again for things that are not of my doing. But maybe I'll all be over by the time I write my fifth book. It was important that I should start early in order to cut short what was being constructed around me."

"I wanted to reappropriate my Christian name, my image and my life. I thought of using a pseudonym, then I gave up the idea. I'm not trying to give myself an image, but to recover my existing one. I'm beginning my own life. People have always come down on me like a ton of bricks without my asking for it. At least now they'll be able to do so for a reason."

The reason is her book, *Premier Roman* (First Novel), published by Julliard this month. The novel has ambitions that are rare nowadays in fiction: it has a complex narrative structure with a multitude of



Pingeot comforted by her mother at Mitterrand's funeral in 1996. With her first novel she aims to move on from her media image and to 'reappropriate' her life

characters and a variety of different points of view, places and situations.

Premier Roman is about young people starting out in life — "Many children from bourgeois families, but many young second-generation immigrants, *petits bourgeois* from the provinces and well-educated kids from the 5th and 6th arrondissements in Paris," hers is a narrative dithering within arbitrary boundaries set by a particular episode in the history of intellectual Paris, with its own brand of exaggerated anarchy and self-indulgence. Agathe was one of them.

"One of her ambitions was to escape from that cramped milieu."

The novel's epigraph, consists of lines from Louis Aragon's poem, "La Beauté du Diable," which begins "Young people, time is ahead of you like an escaped horse." The two central characters, Agathe and Victor, have been having an affair for some time. They believe their mutual fidelity should be "profound, total and feasible."

Agathe, a hard-working student at the Ecole Normale Supérieure, is rather frivolous, generally pleasure-loving, and both sensual and intelligent.

— which is of course a compliment. It is the Beauvoir book with which Pingeot says she feels the greatest affinity. "Later on in her memoirs she becomes tougher and more rigid, and her humorlessness worries me. But when you read Beauvoir, when you see what she has to say about freedom, you can measure the degree to which the situation has declined since."

It is encouraging that a 23-year-old should say that she wants to base her thinking and her desire to write on "the idea that one can at any time create one's own life, and that one is entitled, if not to do anything, then to invent anything," and that she should venture to write such a messy, self-conscious book.

"While older women were concerned in their increasingly slender tones, with husbands and families, Pingeot tells the story of a woman who thinks that 'a sense of guilt is the worst sin,' and who wonders 'how it is possible to live several lives at the same time and remain true to oneself'."

That may be a naive question, but which women novels ask it nowadays? Who wants to live several

lives that do not centre on "my husband"? Pingeot looks at least like the merit of reviving the idea.

The other writer who haunts the pages of Premier Roman is Marguerite Yourcenar — and not just because Pingeot pays her a direct tribute by calling one of her characters Hadrien, a young, elegant and rather vulnerable man when Agathe saves him from a "fantastic, farcical" moment, and who comes to live with her.

Premier Roman is dedicated to "my father." The father in the novel, although he does not play a prominent role, is immensely important. Agathe. He loves his daughter "more than moderately," while leaving his own life.

Pingeot is probably not familiar enough with Yourcenar's life to realize that the relationship between Agathe and her father, "elderly, he is sure but, in his political and moral reflections, the youngest man she had ever known," is incredibly similar to that between Yourcenar and her father, Michel de Certeau.

Could it just be the father's age — in both cases much greater than the daughter's — that creates the parallel? Probably not. Like Yourcenar (and, probably, like Pingeot), Agathe says her relationship with her father is one of "apprenticeship, not submission." Her father has guided her in her choice of books to read, her literary preferences. Yet he had never suggested to her the study philosophy. That was her choice, and it set her apart from him without causing any rift.

The father in Premier Roman, who is a publisher, wants his daughter to be free and, with a mixture of pride and anxiety, follow his passion for showjumping. He, like Yourcenar, is "not much of a frayer," in the narrow sense of the word. He admires the beauty of the world, but he does not try to be charming.

"Father and daughter formed an unassailable pair, who could tell their stories and members of the family would not need to express their complicity; silence was enough."

One hopes that Pingeot deals with the same force and freedom as Yourcenar, the father's dream she should become a memoirist.

(April 3)

stained a string quartet from me. I shall never write one, just as I've never written a symphony or a concerto, because I think that form equals content, that content equals material, and that material equals form.

Then I had this dream of four musicians who were playing in helicopters; I thought it was an interesting possibility and began to think about it. I might be carried out, I went to the studio a few days later, and through a large window on the fourth floor, saw four helicopters wheeling around the building. This encouraged me to pursue the idea of making the dream come true. I imagined to do so after much difficulty, in the Netherlands in 1985. It farms the time out on Wednesday, in Licht. It will be performed in Leipzig as part of the 1989 Saxony Art Festival. Sometimes one's life takes a new turn.

Your life seems to be heading towards a certain isolation. Is that something you sought deliberately?

Absolutely not. I've spent more than half my life copying out, or dictating, or writing 32 works for orchestra and they are, almost

without the tobacco industry's cooperation.

It is unfortunate that the tobacco industry has decided to walk away from negotiations before Congress has completed consideration of national tobacco legislation, but their reluctance to cooperate will have little, if any effect on congressional action," said Rep. Deborah Pryce, R-Ohio, whom House Speaker Newt Gingrich, R-Georgia, picked to oversee House GOP tobacco strategy. "Children are the real issue here, not tobacco companies."

Sen. Kent Conrad, D-North Dakota, who heads the Senate Democratic working group on tobacco issues, was scornful of the tobacco companies' move. "Poor babies," he said. "We don't need their blessing to pass tough tobacco legislation. In many ways this is liberating — do it right, and not try to dance around their approval. They weren't going to approve of anything that was any good anyway."

Sen. John McCain, R-Arizona, who sponsored the leading bill on Capitol Hill, said Congress must go forward "with or without the industry's support," adding that "we could never be placed in a position

for the most part, President Clinton and members of Congress said that they would proceed toward comprehensive tobacco legislation without the industry's cooperation.

"I'm very disappointed," Clinton said. "I have been working for two years on this and I don't intend to stop now."

Clinton said the companies may have made a political miscalculation of their struggle for survival. "I hope they will reconsider because I am determined to get this done this year," he said. "I don't think this is the time for threats by anybody."

His top health adviser, Bruce Reed, was even more blunt about the escalating tensions around efforts to pass America's first anti-smoking policy. Smiling, the mild-mannered Reed said: "We're at war."

The tough talk was echoed on Capitol Hill, where lawmakers from both parties vowed to pass legislation this year designed to reduce smoking by young people with or

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The Washington Post

Big Tobacco Firms Pull Out of Deal

John Behrman

THE NATION'S major tobacco companies last week ended negotiations with Congress to pass legislation to regulate tobacco, after the industry had been rebuffed by Congress.

Saying that tobacco policy is "broken beyond repair," RJR Nabisco Chief Executive Officer Steven F. Goldstone said: "There is no process which is even remotely likely to lead to an acceptable comprehensive solution this year."

The announcements appear to mark the end of a nearly year-long strategy by the historically defiant industry to take a conciliatory path by working with Congress and the White House to reach a national tobacco settlement. After months of negotiations, the leading bill by Congress calls for the industry to pay \$516 billion — much more than it had agreed to pay in a deal announced last June — while providing for less legal protection than it had sought.

"Washington," Goldstone said, "has refused to collect more tobacco revenues while playing the politics of punishment."

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Yeltsin Puts Pressure On Latvia

David Hoffman in Moscow

A SUMMERING dispute over the treatment of ethnic Russians in Latvia intensified last week as President Boris Yeltsin threatened to take economic reprisals against Riga, such as rerouting Russian oil exports away from the Baltic state.

After a month of rhetorical posturing between Russia and Latvia, Yeltsin for the first time endorsed calls by Russian politicians to tighten the economic noose around Latvia in retaliation for the treatment of Russians there.

Presidential spokesman Sergei Yastrebinsky told the Interfax news service that Yeltsin supports targeted measures against Latvian goods that were proposed by Russian regional leaders, including Mayor Yuri Lushkov of Moscow. Yastrebinsky said that these measures would stop short of official sanctions.

The dispute was triggered by an incident in Riga on March 3, when several thousand Russian speakers held a demonstration to protest higher residential fees and demand that Latvia continue to recognize their Soviet-era passports. Latvia, which became independent in 1991, has imposed strict citizenship requirements, including language-fluency tests. About 700,000 people, or one-third of the Latvian population, are Russian-speaking.

Police dispersed the rally with force. The incident unleashed a torrent of criticism from Russian politicians. On March 31, Lushkov accused Latvia of "genocide" and has led a campaign to impose economic sanctions. The Kremlin has said economic measures were being studied.

Last week, Yastrebinsky said that Yeltsin had ordered the government to "pay the most serious attention to the possibility of diversifying the routes of Russian oil exports" away from Latvia.

Latvia could be hurt severely by Russian sanctions. Latvian officials have said Russia is its biggest trade partner. In 1997 Russia accounted for 21 percent of Latvia's \$1.65 billion in exports and 15.6 percent of the \$2.7 billion in imports.

The winds struck with such intensity around here that they "sounded like the Russian tankers," said a trucker who was involved in a truck accident on a highway near the town of Riga, which arrived by huddling in a hallway with fellow workers. The trucker was killed. In the South, wrote Donald E. Baker and Edward Walsh in Birmingham.

Emergency officials said that at least 41 people were killed and hundreds of homes were damaged or destroyed.

The storm that carried in the tornadoes brushed Mississippi and crossed violently through central Alabama before moving northeast into Georgia and over the Carolinas toward the Atlantic. Officials said it left 11 people dead in Alabama and at least eight in Georgia and one in Mississippi. They warned that the toll could rise as emergency teams searched the wreckage.

President Clinton declared portions of Alabama and Georgia major disaster areas, making them eligible for federal assistance, including housing, low-cost loans and aid to local governments.

Musical adventures of a septuagenarian

Stockhausen, 70 this year, tells **Pierre Gervasoni** of the problems facing an avant-garde composer

YOU are shortly due to complete a unique project you've been working on since 1977 — *12bit (Light)*, an opera built around the seven days of the week. What first motivated you to work on it?

Before starting Licht, I spent three years composing *Sixtus*, a short opera in the form of a cycle, the 12 months and the 12 signs of the Zodiac. With Licht I became interested in the week, and I'm thinking of tackling *Der Tag* [The Day] later on, which will be a 24-hour cycle. I'm attracted by cosmic rhythms and cycles connected with the movements of the planets and stars.

Another major project of yours over the past few years has been the production of recordings of your works, with your own company. What prompted you to set up Stockhausen-Verlag?

I did more than 100 records for Deutsche Grammophon and many other recording companies. But in 1984 the marketing directors of the major firms said they could no longer go on producing my works as they had in the past. I'd designed masterpieces, written texts and done sound mixing — all for nothing.

Yet you were the composer... The only living composer who was losing their money. That wasn't enough for their own profitability targets. Yet Gesang Der Jünglinge [Song Of The Adolescents] sold 130,000 copies. All my records were gradually withdrawn from the catalogue. So in 1991 I thought I'd produce one or two discs myself, just to see. We now have more than 70 in the catalogue.

Do you sell a lot of them?

No. CD No. 3, which is devoted to electronic music such as *Gesang*

Der Jünglinge and *Kontakte*, is the most in demand. We sell about 150 a year. Then comes *Gruppen*, with about 100 a year. But no matter: the aim isn't to get rich, but to ensure that the works remain available.

It has been claimed that, for similar reasons, two other composers who wrote scores so they could be preserved in fallout shelters all over the world.

That's not really true. Photocopies of the rough drafts of my first 13 works were sold — for the cost of the photocopies — to nine international institutions, such as New York University and the Scher Institute in Basel. Stockhausen doesn't have the cash to build fallout shelters. It's probably someone's repressed wish.

It has to be said that your ideas sometimes lay themselves open to overreaction by commentators, particularly when you see four helicopters in a music work.

All came from a dream I had. The Salzburg Festival commis-

sioned a string quartet from me. I shall never write one, just as I've never written a symphony or a concerto, because I think that form equals content, that content equals material, and that material equals form.

Then I had this dream of four musicians who were playing in helicopters; I thought it was an interesting possibility and began to think about it. I might be carried out, I went to the studio a few days later, and through a large window on the fourth floor, saw four helicopters wheeling around the building.

This encouraged me to pursue the idea of making the dream come true. I imagined to do so after much difficulty, in the Netherlands in

'Jerusalem Will Never Be Redivided'

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu talks to Lally Weymouth about his hopes for peace

I've heard that you and U.S. Middle East envoy Dennis Ross have discussed a new proposal: Allowing the Palestinians to build in certain Israeli-held areas near the Jordan Valley.

We're discussing a number of possibilities to bridge the gaps, but we haven't made any final determination. I think Ross saw a serious effort on the part of the Israeli government. There are two principles we believe are essential for peace. One is that the Palestinians fulfill the promises they gave us to fight terrorism and snuff their covenant, and the second is that the U.S. recognize the need for Israel to determine its security needs and hence the area from which it will withdraw.

What is your vision of peace with the Palestinians?

My vision is that at the end of the final settlement, the Palestinians will be able to have their own territory and the ability to govern themselves inside that territory but (with) none of the powers that could threaten Israel.

In other words, they won't be able to have a defense capability? They would be able to have local law and order capabilities, but they shouldn't be able to field a large army or to import weapons that could effectively neutralize Israel's defenses.

So, there will be no Palestinian state?

My opposition to the word "statehood" is because it tends to encompass those unlimited powers that could threaten Israel. I have no problem with the Palestinians

running their own lives. Therefore, I envision a final settlement which is a balance of the Palestinians' need to run their own affairs and our need to protect Israel's security. I believe that this government can strike a balance and deliver an agreement which the overwhelming majority of Israelis can stand by.

Your right-wing supporters oppose a deal that would hand over land to the Palestinians. I made it very clear that if [Palestinian leader Yasser] Arafat and the Palestinian Authority keep their side of the bargain, we'll keep our aid.

Your relationship with the Clinton administration does not appear to be successful. Why?

It's had its difficult moments. Over the years we've had divided views between American presidents and Israeli prime ministers on Israel's security needs. We had Eisenhower and Ben-Gurion differing on the Sinai; Ford differing with Rabin during the rearmament in 1975; Reagan and Begin clashing over Lebanon.

Do you and President Clinton have a fundamental difference? In comparison to those disagreements, this is... a milder case.

Is it true that the Palestinians only arrest terrorists when Israel presents them with intelligence?

They only act on a specific tip we give them. For example, if we say that terrorist X, living on street Y in city Z, is about to launch a terrorist act against Israel, they'll pick him up. But they don't do systematic sweeps [and] interrogations. They're not making the difficult choice which Egypt and Jordan have made. The choice is whom do you want to make peace with — Israel or the terrorists? It's one or the other, but not both.

Do you have a vision of living in



Netanyahu... "Fifty years ago we were at the abyss of death... I think this is more than the founding fathers could have wished for."

peace one day with the Palestinians?

Yes, I do... not one day, [but] soon. If Arafat accepts my offer to negotiate a permanent settlement, we could have a historic breakthrough with the one government that can deliver. I hope it happens during this term.

What happens if Arafat unilaterally declares a Palestinian state on May 4, 1999, the original deadline for a permanent status agreement?

I wouldn't recommend unilateral action. Palestinian unilateral actions always run the risk of unilateral Israeli actions... Israel cannot be thrown back to the indefensible 1977 boundaries which Egypt and Jordan have made. The choice is whom do you want to make peace with — Israel or the terrorists? It's one or the other, but not both.

Do you have any hope of a treaty with Syria?

Yes, I do. If Syria is less rigid about the conditions for restarting

the negotiations. In any case we have decided that after 20 years of our stay in Lebanon, our objective is to withdraw once we have the necessary security arrangements.

Turning to Israel's celebration of its 50th anniversary...

...You never had worse odds for a people than the Jewish people had 50 years ago when we were at the abyss of death and destruction, when it seemed like you could never mobilize our will to live again. Yet within a very short time we established our independence in our ancient land, reunited our capital, revived an ancient language and produced one of the most advanced technological economies in the world.

We have begun to create a circle of peace, first with Egypt and Jordan and soon, I believe, with the Palestinians and the Syrians and the Lebanese. I think this is more than the founding fathers of Israel could have imagined 50 years ago.

has authority, the word betrayal comes to mind.

Demanding that the CNMI immediately enter into negotiations with the U.S. government to phase in higher labor and immigration standards is the best alternative. The next best option is to break ties with the Northern Mariana Islands. But if neither of the above options is possible, the imposition of quotas on the garment production of the Marianas is a last resort.

Not that a group of Republican congressmen and staffers collectively known as "the Beach Boys" is likely to agree. The nearly 100 Capitol Hill insiders, led by House Majority Whip Tom DeLay and members of Majority Leader Dick Armey's staff — visited the Northern Mariana Islands last year. The CNMI increased by 48 percent over the previous year and that annual exports are expected to hit the \$1 billion-a-year mark in 1998.

When U.S. garment manufacturers are asked to share the loss of domestic market share to an abundant labor, immigration and trade regime in a corrupt backward political entity over which Congress

are banned by their employers from engaging in political or religious activities, or from even socializing or marrying during the period of their labor contracts. In a recent case, a woman who accused a CNMI immigration official of raping her has been given a deportation order by CNMI officials after she underwent a civil lawsuit. The resultant has been convicted and sent to prison.

Whatever happens in the long run, the Northern Mariana garment industry is enjoying a boom that face U.S. manufacturers who export abroad, as well as avoiding U.S. immigration and wage laws. And now here come investigators hired by the Department of the Interior to report that nearly a third of the foreign manufacturers doing business in the islands may not keep House Speaker Dennis Hastert from shelving a reform bill introduced by Democrat George Miller of California that would have required an increase in the island's minimum wage and improve living conditions for foreign workers.

Yet, still, never information

Japan P.M. Unveils Plan For Economy

Sandra Sugawara in Tokyo

BOWING to pressure from foreign lenders, Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto unveiled last week a plan to cut income taxes by \$30 billion over the next two years, a step economists hope will stop Japan's slide into recession.

Hashimoto said Japan's economy was in "quite a serious state" and needed new stimulus. His move reverses a long policy that Japan could not have new tax cuts, so as to keep its budget deficit under control.

Stopping a recession in Japan is emerging as a central goal in international efforts against the financial crisis that is striking much of East Asia. If Japan can get its economy moving by giving citizens more spending money, billions of dollars of imports would be drawn in from all over the region, helping other Asian countries recover.

U.S. ambassador to Japan Thomas Foley called the stimulus package "very encouraging" and "a bold action." The U.S. has led a rising chorus of nations calling for tax cuts to revive economic growth in Japan, the world's second-largest economy.

In Washington, Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin said the move gave Japan a more guarded response. He "welcomed" the step, adding that "what is crucial is that Japan move quickly to put in place a strong program."

Hashimoto's handling of the economy has sent his popularity rating plummeting, but analysts expect his performance last week may turn that around. "Mr. Hashimoto made his break through in his political crisis," said political commentator Shigeo Hayasaka.

Hashimoto gave out few additional details about the tax and spending plan, and there were immediately conflicting interpretations. The Finance Ministry and Hashimoto's office said it was not yet clear how much of a tax cut each taxpayer would receive or when they would get the money.

But the NHK television network reported that the plan would be similar to a \$18 billion tax cut enacted last January, which will amount to \$800 a year for a family of four this year.

In recent weeks, Japan has been hit by a long list of grim economic data. Economists have been warning that Japan's economy is in a "stagnant" state, and that the government's policy of being slow to act, but in order to do so, additional \$30 billion in tax cuts, permanent market and currency controls, and a new policy to reduce the yen's value, are needed to get the economy back on track.

The tax cuts are not expected to take effect until next year. That sent, leading policy makers to wonder if the government would go back on its word, or if it was a routine sign of the money, or if it was a routine sign of the money, or if it was a routine sign of the money.

Austria Confronts Its Shameful Past

William Doroel in Vienna

SIXTY years after the Nazis marched into Austria and were treated as conquering heroes by wildly cheering crowds, a dramatic transformation is taking place in the way this nation of 8 million people looks at one of the most sordid chapters in its long history.

History books have been rewritten so that students can learn that Austria was not just the first victim of Nazi aggression — as it long pretended — but rather behaved in many respects as an ardent sympathizer and active collaborator in the diabolical aims of its native son, Adolf Hitler.

In contrast to former president Kurt Waldheim, who for many years covered up his involvement in wartime atrocities, Austria's leaders now speak with striking candor about the fact that many compatriots were linked to Nazi crimes and that the rampant antisemitism that culminated in the Holocaust had fertile soil here.

Germany's neighbors are still struggling to cope with their legacy of collaboration with the Nazi regime. The ascendancy of a generation born after the war and the release of documents kept secret during the Cold War have done much to erode myths of resistance and stoke a sense of denial that persisted throughout much of Europe.

The trial in France of Maurice Papon, which concluded this month with the wartime official's conviction of complicity in crimes against Jews, cast new light on the extent to which many French officials cooperated with the Nazi occupation. Similarly, it has been forced to acknowledge that it was spared because of a plucky army guarding its borders but because it provided useful financial services to the Nazis.

During ceremonies last month marking the 60th anniversary of the Anschluss, or annexation to Nazi Germany, Austrian Chancellor Viktor Klima emphasized that the time was long overdue "for an open and critical debate so that Austria can draw the right lessons about its past."

He said it was "a long and painful process" to confess Austria's shared responsibility for Nazi crimes. But he insisted Austrians could no longer justify old myths about being overwhelmed by a foreign power. He noted that 700,000 Austrians were Nazi party members, and that many held leading positions in the hierarchy and were guilty of complicity in crimes against humanity.

President Thomas Klestil, Waldheim's successor, also stressed the need to deal squarely with the Nazi past and to do whatever is possible to make amends to the victims, especially members of Austria's once thriving Jewish community who were exterminated or deported. Klestil lamented that "those who were expelled from Austria were invited much too late, and unconsciously, to return home." He said that while serving as ambassador to the United States in the 1980s he felt a particular shame in meeting Austrian Jews who lost their homes and belongings during the Nazi occupation.

"I know how deeply they loved their old home country despite all that happened," Klestil said. They would have had a right to experience Austria's rebirth, and I know that they contributed to our democracy and culture could have been invaluable."

Austria's changing assessment of its historical culpability has gone beyond words.

After two paintings by Egon Schiele loaned by Austria for a recent show in New York were seized

because it was suspected they had belonged to Holocaust victims, Education and Culture Minister Elisabeth Gohrer declared that "immoral decisions" dating to the war must be rectified.

She ordered that once provenance is certified, all national art works confiscated by the Nazis would be returned to their rightful owners — a decision that experts believe will strip more than 100 masterpieces from Vienna's leading museums.

Austria announced recently it would resume cooperation with U.S. agents in the hunt for Nazi criminals reviving an accord suspended in 1980 when Waldheim was barred from the United States after the Justice Department concluded that as a lieutenant in the German army in the Balkans, Waldheim helped the Nazi SS deport prisoners to slave labor or death camps.

This accord symbolically ends the Waldheim era of denial and marks the emergence of a new Austria, which we call, said Elmi Steinberg, executive director of the World Jewish Congress in New York. School textbooks, for decades nourished the myth that Austrians were the Nazis' first victims and suppressed the notion of any national guilt, have been rewritten to emphasize the direct complicity of many Austrians in the Nazi party and Nazi crimes. Vienna's mayor has decreed that the Steven Spielberg Film Schindler's List will be required viewing for all school children in the city.

Klima acknowledged in an interview that the spectacle of foreign criticism during Waldheim's presidency from 1986 to 1994 was an agonizing and humiliating ordeal — one that made Austrians at times feel they belonged to a pariah state.

Once Waldheim left office, Klima's predecessor, Franz Vran-

itzky, moved quickly to refurbish the nation's image and revise Austria's view of history so that it reflected painful truths about widespread Nazi sympathies. As the first Austrian leader born after the war, Klima, 50, says he feels a special moral duty to sustain that legacy.

Klima says the need to confront the truth about the fascist era is not just a matter of coming to terms with history. He believes it also holds special political relevance for today's Austria.

The Freedom Party led by Jörg Haider has emerged as the biggest

fearful movement in Europe and captured 28 percent of the votes in elections to the European Parliament last year. Haider has already stated his claim to replace Klima as Austria's next head of government after national elections are held next year. Haider rejects any comparisons to Nazi or fascist leaders. Nonetheless, he has lived up to his right-wing reputation by publicly praising the employment policies of the Nazi regime and waging a xenophobic campaign to expel foreign workers.

"We must always be vigilant in fighting against racism, fanaticism or indifference," Klima said. "Given the nature of our past, we must never forget how people can be misled by populist demagogues."

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Living in Arms' Way

Evacuations come with the territory, discovers Sue Anne Pressley in Engle, New Mexico

ON THE morning after their wedding out on the family ranch back in 1983, when his newlywed couple might be expected to get busy with the ranch, Russell and Hazel Cain were awakened from sleep early. Along with their two young sons, they were forced to flee their tiny, poorly defended community, packed in the church lot and wait — until the military scheduled missile test over their house and land was completed.

They had lots of company, lots of out-of-town people, all the way from New Mexico, 48 "They got a true New Mexico experience."

In this part of the country, missile tests are common as a matter of course. The Engle ranch is in Engle, New Mexico, having to leave home every time a missile is fired. "We've lived in the Engle ranch for 15 years, and we've lived through 7 missile tests, and 40 miles long, a shut down for certain periods to allow missiles to zoom across the highway. We've been in the unimpeded tourist who thinks he's going to get a good view of a missile test, and it's a real disappointment."

White Sands — the largest military installation in the country,

But people who live here are sometimes conflicted about the presence and influence of the federal government. On one hand, they resent the intrusion into civilian life, environmental matters and grazing rights. On the other, they recognize how utterly dependent the state's economy is on the machinations of Washington politics and the largesse of the federal coffers.

"We have no logging, we have no oil and gas drilling, and the cattle industry is dying — that makes us entirely dependent on defense," said Jim Catron, the county attorney for Catron, Sierra and Socorro counties. "What are we going to do when [Senate Budget Chairman] Pete Domenici, R-New Mexico, dies or gets hit of the Beltway and comes home? May he live as long as Senator Thurmond, or that whole state will be a ghost town."

In this part of the country, missile tests are common as a matter of course. The Engle ranch is in Engle, New Mexico, having to leave home every time a missile is fired. "We've lived in the Engle ranch for 15 years, and we've lived through 7 missile tests, and 40 miles long, a shut down for certain periods to allow missiles to zoom across the highway. We've been in the unimpeded tourist who thinks he's going to get a good view of a missile test, and it's a real disappointment."

White Sands — the largest military installation in the country,

SPIN CYCLE
Inside the Clinton Propaganda
Machine
By Howard Kurtz
Free Press, 324 pp., \$25

Kurtz, however, was allowed to bring his journalist's sensitivity to the other side of the podium, and could then compare the news manipulation he uncovered with the journalistic product that it spun out — rather like a media double agent. It's as if documentary filmmaker D.A. Pennebaker (*The War Room*) showed you what stories looked like before and after they were massaged by the Clinton War Room. That level of analysis provides Spin Cycle's best moments. We see White House press secre-

PERHAPS most surprising is the way the White House handles the investigations reporters who would seem to be its biggest enemies. During the Senate campaign finance inquiries of 1997, Republicans complained that the White House was leaking damaging information days before it was to be the subject of hearings, in order to deflate the impact of public testimony. Kurtz demonstrates that this was exactly what was going on. In one extreme example, White House attorney Lanny Davis complained to Washington Post reporter Susan Schmidt about The Post's coverage of a damaging revelation Schmidt

In the end, the reader can't help but conclude that McCurry and his team understand something fundamental about the president's ability to speak directly to the public, an insight that the media have yet to digest. Given the enormous subject matter, there's plenty that Spin Cycle doesn't do. Since it captures events almost instantly — right up to the Monica Lewinsky scandal — Spin Cycle sacrifices most claims to historical understanding. Without a detailed discussion of earlier administrations, there's no way to know whether the Clinton White House has merely updated past scripts or

well-researched, historically considered stories that would show the administration's triumphs (in areas like student loans and water pollution control). They conclude that the "gothic" press is, in that crucial sense, biased against them.

It is equally true, though not noted in this book, that even journalists who most enjoy pantomiming an adversarial role spend virtually no time presenting comprehensive policy stories that might well show the administration's deeper shortcomings (in areas like NAFTA job creation and welfare reform). In that sense, the scandal-a-day press serves the White House's interests quite well.

“THE Sierra Nevada stands alone,” writes the author, “in the longest, highest single-peak mountain range in the United States. It rises over 400 miles long and 50 to 60 miles wide.” Veru Johnston seems to have read almost every one of these countless miles, and what she hasn’t counted entered firsthand — the “extremely rare” wolvenine, for example — she reports on courtesy of others’ observations. It’s a little tedious, of course, and her evocative language in one of the book’s w pieces: “The immensity is concealed by the harmonic proportions. From buttressed base to superstructure they look so perfectly proportioned that you hardly notice the tremendous scale of the trunks or realize that if one fluted base were axed, into a city street it would block from curb to curb.”

THE authors of these essays include many of cinema's greats: Charles Chaplin, Lillian Gish, Bette Davis, Marcello Mastroianni, Jack Nicholson, and others, all expand-

ing on what they did best. Mayr Axtor conjures up the wiles of things going on — "the hubble of little instructions, from crew to crew from director to cameraman" — while an actor is preparing to project intimate emotions. Jeff Danbo comments on what makes a felicitous actor enjoyable to work with: "Someone who's alive — and that means behind the eyes. I like someone who doesn't have everything preplanned, either, so that they can react to what I do." And Hans Cruayn gives the lie to an old Hollywood shillbottle: "The camera... lies like hell and the actor must be prepared to aid in this deception."

Asia crisis

THE crisis in Asia is far from over and may become a further threat to global growth, according to the International Monetary Fund's World Economic Outlook report published this week. The troubles in East Asia, exacerbated by the uncertainties over Japan's economy, have forced the IMF to downgrade its forecast for global growth next year to 4.5 per cent, from the 5.3 per cent predicted in December and the 5.8 per cent expansion projected last autumn.

This confirms that the IMF has consistently underestimated the impact of the crisis in Asia on output and trade in industrial and developing countries.

The "biggest downward revision" has been seen in Indonesia, South Korea and Thailand where, IMF economists report, "the drying up of private foreign financing together

with the large currency depreciation and declines in asset prices are causing sharp contractions in domestic demand".

The IMF's chief economist, Michael Mussa, warned of a possible further decline in output from Indonesia, South Korea and Thailand. He is also worried about India, where the budget deficit is uncomfortably high, and China, where the IMF expects growth to fall to 7 per cent in 1998. But the Fund is predicting an Asian bounce-back next year.

The IMF has also cut growth projections for 1998 in the industrial world by 0.5 of a percentage point to 2.4 per cent. However, British growth is still seen at 2.3 per cent, a more benign prediction than that from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in Paris earlier this month.

The biggest potential problem for the industrialised nations is Japan. IMF staff argue that although Japan's downturn (it will be in recession for the first half of this year) has been exacerbated by the Asian crisis, many of its problems are homegrown. They point to the financial sector, notably the bad loans bedevilling its banking system; the delays in reform to restructure the economy; and the decision to remove fiscal stimulus last year when the economy was too fragile.

While the IMF has hopes that a new package of tax cuts and public spending may help to improve Japan's economy in the second half of this year, it fears recovery could be impeded in 1999 by fiscal tightening and urges Japan to introduce further measures.

Among the rest of the rich economies, growth has been sustained by recovery in Western Europe and robust growth in the

Anglo-Saxon economies of the United States, Canada and Britain. In Germany output will increase from 2.5 per cent to 2.8 per cent, and expansion in France will be even stronger.

The report predicts that the strength of the pound could soon start to reverse itself, providing some much-needed relief for the Chancellor, Gordon Brown, and British exporters. The surge of the pound — up more than 30 percent in a year — has created havoc for UK manufacturers and has put Mr Brown under pressure to lower its value.

The IMF expects the pound to "correct downwards against other European currencies" as the deficit in Britain's balance of payments increases and growth in the European economy surges past the UK.

The IMF still has serious concerns about European monetary union (EMU), particularly the lack of flexibility in labour markets. It

fears that Europe, without the ability to adjust exchange rates after EMU, could face even higher unemployment unless it tackles the labour market problems.

The IMF also seems more cautious about the US economy. It notes that the consequences of the strong dollar together with the Asian crisis could lead to a US current account deficit to \$230 billion this year, some 2.75 per cent of gross domestic product. This, together with the strength of asset prices in the US economy, may lead the US Federal Reserve to raise interest rates.

Mr Miness suggested that the world economy could tolerate a correction of 1.5 per cent in the US stock markets without much real impact — although a fall of 50 per cent would be a different matter.

The Asian crisis is also taking its toll in Latin America, where the IMF estimates it has wiped out 1.5 per cent of growth this year, though output will still be up by 3.4 per cent.

World Economic Outlook Report published by the IMF, Washington

High-rise year for US bosses

Joanna Coles In New York

UNCONCERNED by the fact that the average pay rise for their white-collar staff was a mere 3.8 per cent last year, American chief executives have enjoyed a salary increase of 35 per cent in the same period.

At the top of the league is Sanford Weill, who heads the Travelers Group and now takes home \$230.7 million.

Meanwhile Henry Silverman, chief executive of Candant, who does not appear in the top 10 salary league, can at least take comfort when it comes to stock options. In the league of packages, his \$832.9 million holds top position.

Michael Eisner, chairman of the Walt Disney Corporation, received "total compensation", including salary and stock options which he cashed, of \$524.7 million. The late Roberto Goizueta, who until he died last year headed Coca-Cola, took home \$11.1 million, most of which was in stock options he also cashed.

Richard Scrushy weighs in at number three in the salary chart, taking home \$106 million. His rise is remarkable given the speed with which he built his company HealthSouth from an initial investment of \$50,000 only 14 years ago. He is to fourth place on package remuneration with \$216 million. *Business Week* magazine, which compiles the list of America's top-earning executives, commented: "Good, bad or indifferent, virtually anyone who has spent time in a corner office of a large public company saw his or her net worth rise by several million."

There are no women on either list.

While the average increase for blue-collar workers was 2.6 per cent, Business Week pointed out that overall the rise for top executives was actually less than the 52 per cent increase they enjoyed the previous year.

But the pay cheques were bigger than ever before.

Chronicler Across the Continents

LADY MOSES
By Lucinda Roy
HarperFlamingo, 382 pp. \$24

SINCE a great deal of contemporary African-American women's fiction takes place exclusively within the confines of the United States and the American experience, it often has a kind of confinement of its own, a narrowness of focus that often forces weaker books to descend into a kind of parochialism, to become mired in bathos and laden with platitudes. Perhaps the next level is to be more specific, to write about the African American experience in a larger context. The poet Lucinda Roy, with her debut novel, *Lady Moses, Sing*, takes the challenge head-on. This ambitious book chronicles the life of a young woman, Lucinda, in London of the 1960s, the Virginia of the 1970s, and the West Africa of the 1980s. The songs of Lucinda's mother, Louise Buttercup Moses, and, later, her road to redemption also encompass the African-American experience in Africa with a dash of Sirin.

and her white English stepmother, Louise Buttercup.

The parts are framed by a account of Jacinta's return, with her husband, to the family death-house and burial of the strong and eccentric Louise. This journey finds Jacinta's memories of her poverty-stricken childhood in the death-house, which also included Rudin Garland, the writer/workshop friend of her father, and her mother, a faded, flamboyant, homosexual friend of her mother. But when Simon Moses died suddenly, Jacinta was placed in a foster home of Dickensian squalor inhabited by silent, urine-soaked blacks and her mother's white friends.

With her childhood idyl over, this daughter of both Africa and Europe was subjected to a sexual assault by a white man, and she, too, was witness to the death of her friend, whose blackness she loved to see against the snow.

There is a note on the inside back cover, in the name of the American writer, Eudora Welles, III, who duly whisks her off to America and away from the dismal reality of

Manny Fox turns out to be a brute, liar and madman who terrorifies his own mother. He callously rejects their disabled daughter, Lady, but when she is kidnapped by a madman, Jacinta consents to go to Africa with him for a work project.

There are two interesting bits of Cole, an interpersonally damaged singer and most important, John Turturro, a mine-worker whose love restores her to herself. Manny's subsequent death is a surprise, but the movie ends with both Jacinta and Lady with an opportunity to forge a new life.

LUCINDA ROY's talent lies in the miniature. She has the ability to paint a scene or evoke an emotion in a few seconds of screen time. Her account of Jacinta's giving away her trousseau to a married woman; the way she cues-armed Lady looks at her; the way she provides the house on stilts high above the African soil — these are beautiful and precisely told. Julie Andrews's performance is superb. She screens the way headlights do in those night photographs." Most poignant of all, Roy captures a

The first-person narrative, while colorful, gives the reader a claustrophobic, claustrophobic bit like being inside a moving automobile with its windows and doors locked. You long to stretch your legs, sigh, and look out at the scenery, but you cannot get. The claustrophobic structure marches relentlessly forward, seldom giving the writer an opportunity to breathe. The occasional touch of claustrophobia is the beautiful, beautiful "life sucks" was in English upper classes of the time, let alone part of the vocabulary of a kid from the South. The South is growing up in South London.

The breadth of Lucinda Roy's ambitious scope is to be applauded. I hope that with her next novel she

According to fellow "American Regionalist" Thomas Hart Benton, "never forgot that he came off as Kansas farm, that his folks were plain Kansas folk—plain, elemental things of earth and sky. His Art and the meanings of his Art were rooted cut loose from his background. In the end his ideal expression was a senselessness. Dealing with what that idealism experienced and knew about, John wanted to say emotion more than anything else. It didn't get it; it couldn't get it." But he did get it heard and also beyond it, to an America that was edenic, mythic, leaning toward isolationism's sense of the "frontier" even before they're left home. Even Curry's down-on-the-farm scenes such as his "Kansas" establish a sequence for the future, including the "Unmuzzaged Farm" and "Farm Family"—take scenes of "farm life," husbandry and smoke stacks.

Curry's Midwest sense of time does come through in wheat fields and good strong sun.

was the high point of the Christian era. It was a time when more than one in four adults Britain went to church. Something is going wrong—but not anything that would put the church and its groups completely out of business. The subtext of all this, however, is that the Church—at least in its present form—is finished. God had intended that the church should be a place where the most people only saw the church for a church for a wedding, itself such an act of conspicuous consumption. But now the church is a place for many the extraneous, the occasional is more important than the regular. But how much of this is true? Can life be spread alone now? Or is there some deep spiritual need to be satisfied by the church?

If the mass hysteria that follows the death of Diana is anything to go by, there is still a yearning for something to believe in. It is hard, of course, to believe in the iconography of the church, but the iconography of the collective shows a deep intolerance of those who refused to give in to the "correct" way.

At the same time, television is providing a new, unshared form of the confessional with a confession which a participant confession

By contrast, Spain and Portugal had no "Protestant" or "Catholic" communities and no military crusade drive, away the Catholics and discouraged the pursuit of the strange and potentially disruptive ideas.

"The Protestant Reformation . . . changed the rules. It goes a bit about a hundred years ago, when the church, spawned during the Middle Ages, was the dominant institution in society. . . . The Reformation . . . was the beginning of the end of the church's

[illegible]

The Wesley and Poverty of Nations (UNU, Brynau), published on April 30

Richard Serushy wrote the very first version of the chart, taking home a \$106 million. His rise is remarkable given the speed with which he made his money. He came from an initial investment of \$50,000 only 14 years ago. He is to be fourth place on package revenue, with a stock option worth \$1.5 million.

Business Week magazine, which compiles the list of America's top-earning executives, says Serushy is "bad or indifferent, virtually anyone who has spent time in a corner office of a large public company has heard of his net worth rise by several million."

There are no women on either list.

While the average increase for blue-collar workers was 2.6 percent, Business Week pointed out that the average increase for executives was actually less than the 92 percent increase they enjoyed the previous year.

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The Guardian Weekly

A sorry apology from Clinton

CITY OF WORDS
John Ryle

THE English are famous for saying sorry, apologising at the drop of a hat. It does not mean they feel guilty or accept responsibility. It is ambiguous. It may signify condolence without remorse, or it may mean they are really sorry, repentant as well as regretful. Sorry's not the hardest word. What is hard is knowing what it means.

It's not just the English. The spite of public apologies by world leaders merits exceptional examination. Tony Blair has apologised for the Irish famine, the Japanese prime minister has apologised for the second world war, the Pope has apologised — or repented — for the behaviour of the Catholic Church during the Holocaust. And the United States president has apologised — or repented — for slavery. But it is not quite clear who is saying sorry to whom. Or on whose behalf. Or how sorry they really are.

During President Clinton's tour of Africa he apologised not once but twice. In Uganda he apologised for the slave trade; in Rwanda he apologised for Western inaction in the face of the Rwanda genocide. Back at home Clinton was attacked by the right for "treasoning and pandering" during his African tour. They pointed out that the slaves who were shipped to North America came not from Uganda but from West Africa, that the genocide in Rwanda was committed by African themselves were also involved in the slave trade, and that slavery will exist today by the name of human rights. From the left it was argued

that if there was to be an apology it should be directed not at Africans but at black Americans. It was certainly odd that Clinton chose Uganda for his statement, rather than Senegal, where he went a week later, making a special visit to the 18th century slave port on Gorée Island. On Gorée he could have taken a look at the museum of slavery, an exemplary exhibit that pulls no punches on the participation of Arabs and Africans in the slave trade — as well as the British, the Dutch, the French and half a dozen other European nations.

Clearly, to demand a simultaneous apology from the governments of all countries whose present-day citizens may have had ancestors involved in the slave trade is impractical. If an apology is desirable, there is nothing wrong with one successor government leading the way. But the phrasing of Clinton's apology reveals the difficulties this entails. "Going back", he said, "to the time before we were even a nation, European Americans received the fruits of the slave trade. And we were wrong in that..." To say slavery was wrong is hardly contentious. But to conflate the "European Americans" of the 19th century with a contemporary president is problematic. On the one hand there is the extensive subsequent genetic mixing between blacks and whites and the fact that a large proportion of European Americans are descended from slaves. On the other the oddity of the idea of inherited moral responsibility.

Clinton's apology in Africa was not exactly inclusive but they were clearly subordinate to political interests. And in politics you only say sorry when it suits you.

Boulder — an island of PC values in a redneck pond

Simon Hoggart

I SPENT last week in Boulder, Colorado, in the foothills of the Rocky Mountains. It was the setting for the annual Conference on World Affairs, which sounds boring, but isn't. Like most campus towns in the Old West, Boulder is an island of liberal elite amid the gun-toting rednecks and fundamentalists who assume are all around us. There may be more places offering liberal than hamburger.

It's not true, as alleged, that the police give an incentive stick with every speeding ticket, but the bus drivers can choose their own music. Mike picked Mariah. The joke was: "How many Boulderites does it take to change a lightbulb? None; they just form a support group called 'Coping with darkness'."

On Sunday my house and I went to watch a street comedian downtown. He made two-headed balloon animals called "Cherubino" dolls. When a man went by on a bike, pulling a sort of wheeled tent with a baby inside, he shrugged scornfully and said: "Boulder kid."

The conference brings together about 120 people from around the world in Colorado university. Subtitled, the great history of 20th century America, gave an extraordinary speech. It was a voice of a baby inside, he shrugged scornfully and said: "Boulder kid."

One of the more attractive things about American railroads is that, unlike the harsh cynics of the modern British left, they have a terrific streak of optimism. In his way, social justice and union rights are just as much a part of the American dream

as two cars and a house with central heating.

"We was sharp about the way corporations and technology combine to erode us about." I was in the Atlanta airport, and I caught the little moment they have there. A young couple ran on as the doors were closing and an electronic disembodied voice said: "Due to late entry, there will be a 30-second delay," and everyone just glared furiously at this couple. So I shouted up to the loudspeaker: "George Orwell — your time has come — and gone," so they all glowered at me instead.

Naturally the No 1 subject for the week has been Clinton's known as the presidential pecker. (You can now buy a "White House Intern Kit" including a pair of knickers and a breath mint.)

Molly Ivins, the celebrated Texan columnist, had just been in Canada. "Our neighbour in the north are the most reasonable people on the face of the earth. For them, it must be like living next door in the Simpsons." Like many feminists, Molly is on the president's side — a source of some bafflement, especially in those non-feminist men who think his behaviour disgusting and incestuous.

Molly's general point was that it has nothing to do with Clinton's political skills, which remain constant. From the American liberal who don't believe there is a sufficient conspiracy against Clinton, there is a confidence of moneyed interests desperate to get rid of him. The idea of which they're saying is, "Yes, what he does is unacceptable. But this is one battle against the right that we cannot afford to lose." They don't then add: "So well just have to swallow hard and go with it," but that's what they mean.

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As Europe's supermarket shelves groan under the weight of African goods, **Fred Pearce** asks whether the new agro-industries are helping local economies or destroying both the environment and jobs

Bloom or bust?

AFRICAN exports are booming. Scan the supermarket shelves of Marks & Spencer or Waitrose in Britain and beside the traditional exports of coffee and tea you will find asparagus from South Africa, sweetcorn from Zimbabwe, beans from Gambia and, above all, produce from Kenya.

Thanks to a transfer of European technology to the plains of East Africa, Kenya is fast turning into a major source of winter vegetables. They don't come cheap, of course (at M&S, Kenyan "hand-trimmed" green beans currently retail at \$10 a kilo), but they are of high quality and available in the depths of winter.

And Kenya has even supplanted the Netherlands as a major source of cut flowers. In greenhouses, chilli rooms and packing halls across Kenya I watched thousands of flowers being grown, harvested, trimmed, packed and labelled for shipment to Britain. And I saw orders coming in from UK supermarkets for green vegetables and ready-prepared salads that would be delivered to the shelves within 48 hours.

The latest technology is all there: heated tunnels for roses, which grow faster in red light; floodlights on the cucumber beams to mimic long European summer evenings; drip irrigation that the farmers would be proud of; soil probes to monitor moisture and fertiliser levels.

Growers such as Dicky Evans, the British-born boss of Homegrown, the leading flower firm in Kenya, have turned horticulture into a top export industry for Kenya, alongside tea, coffee and tourism. It has been 15 years ago when Evans, an irrigation engineer, went into partnership with a vegetable grower, and to Asian markets in the UK. Soon he was trucking beans to the airport himself, to cut out unreliable exporters, and diversifying into other crops.

Today he has nine farms across the country, growing flowers by a hippo lake in the Rift Valley and green vegetables at Timau, on the slopes of Mount Kenya. His produce is mostly on supermarket shelves in the UK two days after being harvested.

Evans makes his money by "adding value" in Kenya. "We started putting the vegetables into bags here, then topping and labelling them, then putting labels on," he

says. His flowers, too, are "pruned, sleeved and labelled" locally, right down to the bar code and price sticker. Pursued by ambitious copycat operators (including one run by President Daniel arap Moi's son, Gideon), Evans now puts together entire bouquets and ready-prepared salads.

You'd think M&S might be touchy about buying ready-prepared salads from a country with a cholera epidemic (albeit not in areas where Homegrown has farms). But such is Homegrown's dedication to hygiene that there appears to be little cause for concern.

Evans rates himself a model employer and good neighbour. Pay is \$1,200 a year. "The same as in Morocco", and roughly five times the Kenyan national average. They used to need famine aid up in Timau," he says. "But now we are a major element in a thriving rural economy." However, he wasn't as popular last summer when Homegrown's operation dried up two local rivers at the height of the dry season — an event that has forced him to build a reservoir to capture seasonal flood waters.

Evans gets into spats with critics, though more with white liberals than indigenous Africans. He brushes off criticism about pesticides polluting a protected lake, or "Deep South" plantation conditions, or an event that has forced him to build a reservoir to capture seasonal flood waters.

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On Lake Victoria new technology has exploited, impoverished, degraded and starved the local fishing communities

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perch into Lake Victoria, the world's second largest freshwater lake. Nothing much was seen of them until the late 1970s, when big fat perch more than two metres long and weighing 200kg started eating every other fish in sight (including some 200 species of cichlids found nowhere else on Earth), and establishing themselves as almost the only fish in the lake. It was Boston University fish biologist Les Kaufman, the first mass extinction of vertebrates that scientists have had the opportunity to observe.

But the Nile perch turned out to be very perch, so much so that within 10 years locals could no

longer afford them because the price had soared.

"Traditional fish-processing and mongering businesses in lakeside villages folded and all the perch were picked off to giant state-of-the-art filleting factories for export. Factories in the Kenyan lakeside town of Kisumu alone processed 200 tonnes of Nile perch each day — mostly for sale in Europe.

This is an efficiently run industry: the overall factory capacity is twice what fishermen can find to bring offshore and the perch are clearly being overfished — Kenyan catches are now only one-third of what they were in 1980, and fish less than a kilogram are increasingly caught as net mesh sizes have come down from 30cm to 10cm or less.

Some people have made a lot of money out of this, mostly the factory owners in the East Asia and London. But a report last year by Erik Jansen of the World Conservation Union and Richard Abili of the Kenya Marine and Fisheries Research Institute concluded that very little of the massive foreign exchange revenue is ploughed back into the fishing areas.

Five times as many fish still come out of the lake as 20 years ago, but the industry today provides far fewer jobs and less income for the lakeside communities. The report says that some 15,000 jobs have been lost in the traditional fishing industry compared with just 2,400 created in the Kisumu processing factories.

Five times as many fish still come out of the lake as 20 years ago, but the industry today provides far fewer jobs and less income for the lakeside communities. The report says that some 15,000 jobs have been lost in the traditional fishing industry compared with just 2,400 created in the Kisumu processing factories.

a few resettlements live up to the Chinese government's policy and promises. These are mainly the "model examples of resettlement" while cost, on average, four times more than a typical operation of this kind.

A major problem is the lack of suitable resettlement land. About 30 per cent of the available land is too steep to farm. As much as 80 per cent is severely eroded. One peasant described resettlement sites as "looking like ditches from a distance and plagues on closer inspection".

Many relocatees have simply returned to their homes in the flood zone. Resettlement officials have tried to cover up these failures by ordering local people to pose for visiting senior officials as happily resettled peasants or townsmen.

Unsurprisingly, those working for government agencies, seem to be faring best. Many well-constructed offices and apartment buildings have been built with resettlement funds specifically for government employees.

But the virtual bankruptcy of most state firms means the government is unlikely to be able to keep its promise to create hundreds of thousands of new industrial jobs for the displaced.

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
April 10 1998



Cut above the rest... flowers are packaged for the British market

PLEASE KEEP

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
April 10 1998

Letter from southern Spain Joanna Crowson

All washed up

STRANGE things wash up on the southern beaches of Eastern Europe. From my balcony I have an excellent view of the beach and the *Paseo Marítimo*. Recently, groups of young men were to be seen strutting up and down, looking out to sea, apparently enjoying the view. They occasionally stopped and peered intently out to sea, arousing the interest of others. I'd 5000 nearby. Still others stood up and down the wide, sandy beach on their motorbikes.

Suddenly there was a commotion and the cry went out: "¡Paquete!" The men converged on a package and hauled it in to shallow water. Nothing could be seen of the parcel itself for the heaving crowd around it.

Soon young men began to break away: hands thrust quickly down the front of their trousers and they were off, running away awkwardly with wet shoes and bouncing trousers. Others quickly took their place in the scrum.

It was all over in 15 minutes and the beach slowly emptied, except for a heaving rag of people in the shallows. With 45 per cent unemployment, and more than 70 per cent of the population depending directly or indirectly on a dying fishing industry, these unexpected windfalls must be a welcome addition to the local economy.

Many young men in Barbate with no hope of employment have become *bañeros*, earning their

living hauling away the bundles of canvas illegally shipped in from Morocco by night. You can spot them easily about town — they are the kids with costly trunks. But this latest cargo came ashore in broad daylight, package by package, destined never to reach the markets of northern Europe. The consignment was snatched up by anyone caring to participate.

It is not the first time this had happened. Last December, after a collision at sea, 100kg washed up just outside town. The police, in their unwieldy Nissan Patrols, gave chase to dozens of young men on mopeds, ripping the can of a normally deserted beach. The following week more mopeds were sold in Barbate than in Madrid, and the local mopeds shops sold out. It was a blessing in disguise — from the point of view of the victims of a devastated economy.

Today I saw four packages come ashore. More and more people

crowd the beach front, watching with tolerant interest. I was enthralled by the air of holiday excitement and the unusual sight of people flouting the law so publicly. There is, of course, safety in numbers.

Finally, towards the end of the afternoon, two Civil Guards turned up, and the beach cleared. They walked up and down the beach in unwelcome parody of Barbate's young men until night fall.

MY NEIGHBOUR called by and, telling me that what was washed ashore is "best quality pollen", offered me a swank. Conscious of my reputation as a teacher I refused. He wanted cigarette paper to roll a joint but, as there wasn't any, resorted to a piece of tow-out of the Guardian Weekly.

The next day my eight-year-old students caused me endless trouble shouting "¡Paquete!" to use another across the classroom. The recent

events are already immortalised in children's games designed to torture the teacher.

Now that the excitement is over, I am mindful of the other, less pleasant packages that wash up all too frequently along this coast. These are the "webcasts", another export from Morocco. Illegal immigrants who fail to make it into Europe alive, are washed up on the beach in the unwelcome parody of Barbate's young men until night fall.

Further along this treacherous coast, built at great public expense and placed above the Strait of Gibraltar, is the sculpture of a hand held out to Africa. In theory it reminds Europe offering a symbolic helping hand to its poorest neighbours. I think it looks more like a hand held up with a clear and final message: "Stop. Forgive Europe. No entry."

Notes & Queries Joseph Harber

HOW did Action Man get that scar on his face?

ACTION Man's designers wanted to paint the figure — known as GI Joe in the United States. But lawyers advised them that there was little chance of patenting the human body, so they added the scar and were then able to patent it. — *Alvin Lloyd, Schaumburg, Illinois, USA*

WHEN was the last man "pressed" into the Royal Navy?

THE New last used impressment during the war between Britain and the United States in 1812. Indeed, the practice was substantially the cause of the war. Royal Navy ships having been press-ganging British-born seamen from American vessels to fight against the French. When, 40 years later, the Royal Navy next fought a major war (in the Crimea), the decision was made to proceed without impressment — and the success of this policy resulted in the practice falling into abeyance.

The power, in occasions of need, to impress into the Royal Navy any person of a seafaring character, excluding toryism and gentlemen — does, however, remain within the royal prerogative, although the royal warrant to the naval authorities does not currently permit this power to be exercised. — *Tom Hennell, Wiltshire, Cheshire*

WHAT is scruggin, as in scruggin cake?

IN MY climbing and hill-walking days my Australian friends carried a tin of "scruggin" as emergency ration. This consisted of a mixture of oatmeal, nuts, dried fruit, chocolate and a little fat. It was stuffed into a tin and provided additional energy when required. It could also be used as a fuel source to heat a drink, and its use may have saved many lives. — *Brian Palmer, Nole Side, Hertfordshire*

WHY, on encountering cold air, does my nose run?

CONTRARY to David Boulton's theory — about cold weather (March 22), a runny nose is caused by an activity in the parasympathetic nervous system (the "auto-

matic" part of our nervous system that controls body functions such as pulse, circulation, breathing, temperature, etc.) in response to cold air. Several things can happen, one of which is the parasympathetic system stimulating increased activity in the nasal mucous glands. This your nose runs. — *Jim Hain, Wiltshire, New Zealand*

ON THE back of a fruit juice carton it says "the berry is one of the only three fruits native to North America". Is this true?

APART from persimmons, your lengthening list of genuinely native American fruits should also include pawpaw (*Asimina speciosa*), prickly pear, and papaya (*Carica papaya*). Contrary to much ill-informed opinion — most of it British — these two fruits are not identical; they are unrelated. It should be noted that the persimmon, pawpaw and papaya all bear native American names and that among them only the persimmon has a real parallel elsewhere, in the Japanese kaki. Of similar interest are the native American muscadines, especially the Norton Carolina supercrimson. — *John Rodenbeck, Cairo, Egypt*

Any answers?

DOES any creature (apart from a human) show an appreciation of music — be it as rhythm or melody? — *John Kearney, Crosby, Merseyside*

ARE there still trawlersmen bunched over radios reliant on the BBC radio shipping forecasts for their only source of weather information? — *Mark Hurd, Carrington, Nottingham*

HOW are television viewing figures calculated? How much of a programme do I have to watch before I am deemed to have "viewed" it? — *Hollis Jones, Cullingham, Yorkshire*

Answers should be e-mailed to weekly@guardian.co.uk, faxed to 0171/441171-242-0886, or posted to The Guardian Weekly, 75 Abchurch Lane, London EC4A 3DF. The Notes & Queries website is at <http://mq.guardian.co.uk/>

Flood of complaints over Yangtze dam project

Catherine Hould

CHINA "will have to rely on the military or a man-made flood to force people out of their homes" to complete the giant Three Gorges dam on the Yangtze River, says a senior Chinese official involved in moving the 1.2 million or more people that the dam will displace.

The anonymous official's statement comes in a study released last month by the International Rivers Network, in Berkeley, California, and

Human Rights in China, a monitoring group based in New York.

It reports that "the largest forced resettlement ever undertaken" is "plagued by bad planning, lack of land, inadequate funds and official corruption. The study's author, a Chinese social scientist and expert in resettlement projects associated with Chinese dams, uses the pseudonym Wu Ming ("no name") as protection against reprisals.

The Three Gorges Project Resettlement Bureau claims

that 100,000 people have been moved in the five years since resettlement began, but Wu Ming calculates that the true number is fewer than 50,000. If the dam is to begin generating electricity in 2003 and be completed in 2009, at least 100,000 people will have to be moved every year for the next decade.

Both deadlines are crucial because the officials are racing to complete the dam's resettlement on electricity sales starting in 2003 for a large part of the dam's financing. According to the report, only

a few resettlements live up to the Chinese government's policy and promises. These are mainly the "model examples of resettlement" while cost, on average, four times more than a typical operation of this kind.

A major problem is the lack of suitable resettlement land. About 30 per cent of the available land is too steep to farm. As much as 80 per cent is severely eroded. One peasant described resettlement sites as "looking like ditches from a distance and plagues on closer inspection".

Many relocatees have simply returned to their homes in the flood zone. Resettlement officials have tried to cover up

these failures by ordering local people to pose for visiting senior officials as happily resettled peasants or townsmen.

Unsurprisingly, those working for government agencies, seem to be faring best. Many well-constructed offices and apartment buildings have been built with resettlement funds specifically for government employees.

But the virtual bankruptcy of most state firms means the government is unlikely to be able to keep its promise to create hundreds of thousands of new industrial jobs for the displaced.

Sahara tribe first to reach for the stars

Tim Radford

STONEAGE people built the first astronomical observatory centuries before anyone thought. Scientists working in the Sahara have identified a series of megaliths that predates Stonehenge in Britain and other sites by more than 1,000 years.

Around 6,500 years ago an unknown people living in Nabta, in southern Egypt, began dragging slabs of stone, nearly 3 metres high, into position on the west bank of the Nile.

The alignments run north-south and east-west, and point to the sun where astronomers estimate its solstices would have been 6,000 years ago. "This is the oldest documented astronomical alignment of megaliths in the world," says Professor McKim Malville of the University of Colorado at Boulder, who — with colleagues from the United States, Egypt and Poland — has completed a satellite survey of the stones.

"A lot of effort went into the construction of a purely symbolic and ceremonial site." The ruins are beside what would have been the shoreline of a lake that filled with water about 11,000 years ago when the African monsoon moved north. It was used by nomads until 4,800 years ago, when the rainfall patterns shifted, and the area became arid and uninhabited.

Five alignments radiate out from a central collection of stones. Hence one was a curved track resembling a cow standing upright.

The researchers report that they found the remains of a stone-lined cattle, including a skeleton laid to rest in a clay-lined chamber. There were chambers from ancient hearths, and fragments of decorated ostrich eggshells.

The stones are made evidence of a vanished world — and a prototype of the pyramid builders who would arrive 2,500 or 3,000 years later. The Nabta megaliths are the earliest evidence of a vanished world — and a prototype of the pyramid builders who would arrive 2,500 or 3,000 years later. The Nabta megaliths are the earliest evidence of a vanished world — and a prototype of the pyramid builders who would arrive 2,500 or 3,000 years later.



One of the megaliths found at a site in southern Egypt that scientists believe was built to mark the movement of the heavens

Africa, and used cattle in their rituals just as Mesopotamians did today, says Prof Malville. Because Nabta was close to the Tropic of Cancer, the noon sun would be directly overhead and for a brief while each day, the standing stones would cast no shadows.

"These vertical sighting stones correspond to the zenith sun during the summer solstice," he says. "For many cultures in the tropics, the zenith sun has been a major event for millennia."

Some of the other alignments are still puzzling the archaeologists — scientists who specialise in interpreting patterns in stone left by vanished civilisations. Some of the megaliths would probably have been



One of the megaliths found at a site in southern Egypt that scientists believe was built to mark the movement of the heavens

